

XVII



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

This winter is bloody awful. For Christ's sake, first it seems to be skipping the cold time altogether, leaving parts of Germany in such a warm and chilling temperature that spring seems to be around a nearby corner. Then the temperatures drop for nearly twenty degrees Celsius in a matter of few days. When writing these lines, which is several weeks before the release of the magazine, not even some considerable snow had hit the shores of Northern Germany. What a contrast to the last year that is ...

Some weeks later everything is back on the road to spring again. At least in this part of Europe, the winter has been rather mild this time. With the exception of a short cold interval.

Anyway, unlike in the previous edition the current one does not have a backlog, which is a good thing, because I do not have to bother myself in poking band to get their interviews done. There are already plans for the next edition and some positive feedback has reached me already. Again, the selection is quite diverse and covers generally bands from small scenes, which tend to be neglected a bit. Due to my ignorance towards Facebook and Twitter and Google+ and most of the other ones --- I have a Diaspora account – it is a bit difficult to get the mails across bands these days. What has become of the ordinary homepage and the e-mail newsletter?

A short glance over the index of this edition reveals that the amount of poems has increased considerably. Some might wonder why I tend to pick bands with female voices so much? Well, call it a certain fancy if you like. In terms of Nina Grollmann, it had rather been the amusing short line on their bandcamp profile that had caught my attention, than the nonchalance with which she tends to play her music.

Why I like to write poems on music? Well, I think Alice Rose is to blame for this:

<http://www.archive.org/details/pm001>

(the last track of a really beautiful release)

Yet the way and reason I write about music in such a way leaves me a bit uncomfortable; especially when it comes to this freestyle stuff. Maybe I still have to get used to it, but it is considerably more difficult than simply bashing some awful demo release. For instance, when I dealt with the composition of Rosie Thomas, the starting point had been a browsing through various releases at bandcamp. Being able to download the track for free, I had a chance to deal with it in a somewhat congenial manner, but I never searched for who she was. Well, as I had been curious in some extent I did this a few days ago and found myself in a slightly awkward situation, because she has been able to reach for some fame already – even a Wikipedia entry – and falls out of the category what this humble magazine actually tries to promote. She is not really “a dead spot of light” so to speak. Nevertheless, it had been fun to write the poem on her composition ... and it would be nice to get some feedback on this stuff. Recommendations are a bit tricky though ...

Requests of interviews and reviews are still possible ... I am always open to get in touch with new bands and artists. Also from non-metal genres.

And as I do not want to write this every time in every freaking interview:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answer and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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All the best ...

oneyoudontknow

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Interviews

JT Bruce

Why don't you lay out some of the background of the band. When and by whom had it been started; what had the intentions been ... which bands could be referred to as a source for inspiration?

There seems to be some confusion about this, so this is a good opportunity to clear it up: JT Bruce is not a band. I am JT Bruce, that's my name. I'm just one guy, and I make all the music myself. The only collaboration I've done on my albums are some brief vocals on The Dreamer's Paradox.

What kind of instruments do you play and have been used for your albums so far?

I play the guitar and bass - all the rest of the instruments in my music are synthesized, sampled, or sequenced.

The band name refers to your name, or? Well, it does not sound very creative.

That's correct, the 'band' name is just my name. Not very creative maybe, but it works.

Seeing as your name is Bruce, what kind of philosophy department would you be in?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_p0CgPeyA

I'm New Bruce from the department of obscure trivia, outer space factoids, and pop- culture references.

Why don't you write a few lines on your albums. What kind of music can be found on these and in what respect do these differ from each other:

Anomalous Material (2005)

This is my first album, I finished it when I was 17 years old and it represents a really early view of my musical ideas. I was still learning a lot about music and my instruments and trying to find music that I liked and connected with. The album itself is a collection of tracks made over the course of a year or two – some of the songs were used in film projects of mine, and others were written for music classes I was taking at the time. Anomalous Material is just a collection of more or less unrelated material. The centerpiece for me is The Artist, The Sage, and The Jester, where I sat down to write the most epic piece of music I was capable of at the time. Until Bellatrix on Universica, it was my longest song.

The Dreamer's Paradox (2006)

On this album, I focused on making a cohesive concept album that had concrete and recurring musical themes. I spent a long time planning the album, fine-tuning the different themes, deciding on song structures that could shift between them, and trying to build a musical language. I wanted it to be complex, something that you could listen to many times and still notice new things about it. I wanted to tell a story with this music, but the degree to which that succeeded is anyone's guess. The Dreamer's Paradox remains the most popular of my albums.

Universica (2008)

This album is a lot different than my first two. In some ways, it continues the concept album idea of The Dreamer's Paradox, but all the songs on this album can stand alone and contain their own unique ideas. I incorporated a much heavier electronic, almost industrial influence. I was interested in creating textures and tones that I'd never heard or used before. As a result, the album is slower and more brooding than the first two, but some of my favorite tracks are from Universica.

Ruined Subjects (2011)

This EP, in a way, is a return to the way I did Anomalous Material. It's a collection of unrelated tracks that were either written for one of the albums and thrown out, or were made for a variety of film projects I've worked on over the years. I look at Anomalous Material, The Dreamer's Paradox, and Universica as a trilogy of albums that marks my progress as a composer and musician. Ruined Subjects is something completely different, not meant to be taken as a regular album release, and will act like a transition to whatever comes next.

How long did it take you to get 'Anomalous Material' done and how did you record it? Were other musicians, aside from you, involved in the process of creating it? What about the other albums?

Anomalous Material probably took me a year and a half, but when I started writing and recording these songs, I didn't set out to make an album. I had just about the simplest recording set-up possible – a direct line from my guitar's effects pedal to my computer. I didn't get a bass until The Dreamer's Paradox, and I used the same cheap software all the way through Universica.

There seems to be a kind of constancy, which can be discovered throughout all of your albums – ignoring the latest compilation for a moment: each of them consists fewer but generally longer tracks. Is this the kind of evolution you have had in mind over the years: more complex arranged music? Or is it merely a snapshot of the today and you might take the listener back to 'easier' stuff in the future again...

The evolution of track length was entirely unintentional. Universica has long tracks because I felt that's the amount of time I needed to complete the musical ideas, and the ideas themselves got bigger and bigger in each subsequent recording. I love complex music, and I was always trying to make the next song deeper and more involved than the last, trying to push my abilities as a composer. The albums are really meant to be listened to in their entirety, not just as isolated tracks. In that sense, it almost doesn't matter how long the songs are as long as you can move through the album from start to finish.

The Dreamer's Paradox is a curious recording. Ten instrumental tracks with some narrative in the final one. Why did you choose to add the text to 'Hypnic Jerk' instead of printing it in the booklet for instance and leaving the track without any kind of voice?

When The Dreamer's Paradox was first conceived, it was going to have full vocals and lyrics. I'd written a big, overly ambitious story that would be told through the lyrics over the course of the album. When I actually began to record the music, I realized it worked much better as an instrumental album, and shelved the vocals. But I still had this thematic concept that I wanted to get across, because it was the inspiration behind the music. That's the text that ended up in Hypnic Jerk. There was no booklet to print it in, either. I never pressed that album to CDs. I wrote a similar text for Universica that only appeared in the liner notes.



Furthermore, where did you take your inspiration from; in terms of writing the text? Freud comes to mind for instance.

I've always had vivid, highly visual dreams since I was a kid. The story for the album was about someone whose life was wrecked when he tried to use dreaming as a tool for escaping reality. It was a concept that inspired the music, although you'd probably never guess without hearing that weird last track.

Dreams cannot always be deemed positive per se. They can create an illusion an escape, which purports to reflect reality, but it actually presents it in a distorted kind of way. Chris Hedges refers to it as a kind of 'infantilism' to which the individual likes to move back towards, because the reality has become 'unbearable'. How would you respond to this?

I have huge respect for Chris Hedges, but I disagree with his idea of dreaming as a return to infantilism. In fact, for me at least, it's almost the opposite – it's the brain trying to become the master of its reality. The story in The Dreamer's Paradox warns about the dangers of letting dreams take control of you, but when experienced normally, they are extremely necessary to our own sanity. The mind is an extremely complicated biological system that must maintain its functions on its own terms, and in doing so it moves human understanding forward by combining thoughts into novel forms, reviewing and cataloguing memories, and exercising our mental facilities in ways that are impossible while awake. Humans may want to move backwards, but our dreams push us forward.

How do you see the world in which the individual is constantly bombardment with pseudo-realities. The media is presenting us a distorted view on the world and we ourselves are retreating from the real world, because we are unable to face the fact. Chomsky speaks of a need for 'intellectual self-defence' in this regard.

I feel very mixed about the media and its role in our society. On one hand, we're faced with communication technology that has the power to change our world for the better, but much of it seems to be squandered on entertainment for the lowest common denominator, or used as a propaganda tool by organizations with aggressive political agendas. I think if we can learn to use the technology righteously, then civilization can be vastly improved by it. The blame can't be placed on the tools, but on the people using them.

Is it possible to break the paradox? Does the dystopian literature not negate this?

I think the paradox can absolutely be broken. The real question is whether people want to break it. Since you're bringing up dystopian literature, I believe that Huxley ended up being correct, not Orwell – the problem isn't that we're being deprived of information, it's that we have so much information we can't tell the noise from the signal.

Leaving dreams aside, the third album leads the listener into a different sphere: space. How did that come?

I've always been fascinated and inspired by space. Universica deals entirely with the universe beyond our planet, from the cosmic soundscapes to the album art to the naming convention of the tracks. When you write instrumental music, you can't fall back on lyrics to provide visual ideas or track names, you have to draw it from the music itself, which is a strange task that I personally enjoy. With Universica, I tried to draw personality from the stars themselves and apply it to the music.

The relation of star ↔ music ... how does one have to imagine it? Did you use references from old literature or what have your sources been?

One can imagine it however they like. For me personally, I looked more at the science behind the stars, the charts that map their positions and distances, the sources of their names, and the constellations they belong to. I steered away from astrology and myth, but people are welcome to apply their own interpretations to the relationship between music and the cosmos. The link can be both poetic and mathematical.

Speaking of instrumental tracks. Why do you not compose music in a more common and with a, let us call it, repetitive manner or style? What are the reasons for not using lyrics?

The beauty of instrumental music is that anyone is free to interpret it in their own way. They can pull their own emotions from it and project their own thoughts on top of it. With lyrics, you're more or less locked into a certain meaning, and there's a lot less room for the listener's imagination. I try to avoid repetition because I like music that takes you somewhere. Music that excites me is like an unpredictable adventure, not several laps around the same track.

I remember that you had some 'real' discs of your album for sale at some point. Are these still available or are all copies sold out? I case this would be true, is there any chance to see a re-release at some point in the future?

I produced hard copies of Universica, and I still have some left. Anyone can e-mail me if they'd like to buy one, I sell them relatively cheap.

Interestingly enough, all of your music has been released by yourself. Why did or do you not use a label to distribute your art?

To be honest, no labels were interested in my music. I submitted CDs to a handful of record labels but received pretty standard rejection letters in return. The record industry is having a difficult time transitioning into the age of the internet so I doubt a label would pick me up at this point.

Seeing as you spread your music free, what would be your opinion on the 'constellation of tensions' between download vs. physical release? Is Jamendo a way to deal with the amount of (illegal) downloads and a means to compensate users for their work?

Internet distribution is here to stay, and it's superior to the old model in many ways. The only challenge is to get money into the hands of people who create content, to compensate them for their work, and that's the issue I've been struggling with. I gave my music away for free initially because I was completely unknown and that was the only way to get people to listen at all. After that point, it became expected that my music would be released for free. But, importantly, I liked to give it away. Giving people something personal like music for free and having them respond positively is an amazing gift in itself. Unfortunately, it seems impossible for me to make a living making music, and this is why I haven't come out with a new album since Universica.

Jamendo and the rest of the the free music scene has been invaluable to my music, and without it you almost certainly would never have heard it. The issue of piracy is an important one for creative industries, but not the evil monster they make it out to be. Despite giving my work away 100% free of cost, people still buy my physical CDs and offer donations in exchange. Licensing and advertising revenue through Jamendo and other sites also provide a small amount of income, but again, not nearly enough to make a living.

What about Copyright and Intellectual Property? Personally, I find the Creative Commons a nice tool, but the limited amounts of licenses, the lack of compatibility and the general problem of non-CC content limits its degree and usage considerably.

Copyright law in the USA is ridiculous and needs to be rewritten. I do believe that artists and musicians should own their work and be able to make money off of it, but the current copyright laws are broken and a better system is needed. I don't think Creative Commons is the way to do this, but it has been a valuable tool for me. CC Licenses protect the rights of the artist, contain none of the restrictions of copyright, and allow for maximum exposure. At the same time, it's limited in scope and only really appropriate for certain situations.

You also make animations, right? Do you have certain ideas in your head already when you compose the music? What kind of animations do you make and where can these be found? Is this merely a hobby of yours or do you also make professional ones?

I do make animations, and that's actually how I make a living. The music I make for my films has to serve the needs of the film above all else, and I'm constantly surprised by how much music can add to the meaning of the images on screen. You can see a lot of my animations on my website, on YouTube, and on Vimeo. A Google search should pull them up.

Then there are drawings. From an outside perspective, you seem to have to channel a lot of creative energy. What kind of drawings are done by you and how would you describe your style? You have an account at Deviant Art and how often do you post stuff there?

I haven't done much standalone artwork recently since I've been trying to focus on my animation, but I keep my drawings pretty weird like the rest of my stuff. It's hard to describe my style because it keeps evolving. I don't post on Deviant Art very often, my account there is more of a long-term repository for stuff I've had on the internet for a while.

Considering the breadth of styles in which you craft something, do you have certain 'fits' in which you are very creative and are able to get done a lot; or is everything a more steady and continuous process?

I like to think of creativity as a force like inertia – an object at rest tends to stay at rest, but once you put in the energy to get moving, it can be hard to stop. Sometimes I hit a lot of friction and get frustrated with myself and my work, but pouring a lot of energy into a big project can be exhilarating and highly rewarding.

Your albums are quite popular at Jamendo. Do you get a lot of feedback from the fans over there? What about other sites in the Internet?

I get a lot of feedback from people at Jamendo and Last.fm, two great music sharing sites that have done a lot to get my music out there. I've said it before, but sites like Jamendo have been absolutely key in helping me reach people with my music.

It has been some time since Universica, your latest 'real' output from you, so how are the chances to hear some new music from you?

I would love to make more music, but it all depends on how much time I have. I'm working really hard right now on trying to make ends meet with my animation and film work. If and when I do release another album, it will likely be in a very different direction than Universica – something harder, faster, and more raw. I'd like to bring things back to earth and write something with lots of guitars and attitude. I have no idea when this will be, unfortunately, but it's something I'd love to do.

I vaguely remember that the old homepage of yours had some collaboration tracks. What has become of these? Is there any chance you will make them available again? May there even be a possibility to see it turn into a 'full album'?

I'm not sure exactly what tracks you're talking about, but they may have ended up on Ruined Rubjects. Most of the unreleased material I've made in the past 5 or 6 years or so that was any good ended up on that EP.

How can someone contact you? You do have a homepage, right?

My website is at www.subjectruin.net, and I have a blog at www.jtbruce.net

Anyone can also email me at jt@subjectruin.net, I read and respond to everyone's emails.

Well .. some closing comments ... if you like.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to answer your questions! They were very insightful, and I hope you and your readers find my answers interesting.

Funeral Moth

It is nice to have the chance to do an interview with you. Hopefully you are all fine.

Makoto: Thanks for the interview. On 10th December, we went to Sendai where is north part of Japan and suffered terrible earthquake in March... There were still some damages in the city but people there keep the flames of metal and they rise again!

The name of your band has a clear reference to the style of music you play: funeral (doom). How does the moth fit into this?

Makoto: Sometime in 2005, I and Nobuyuki were trying to create new doom band. Then our previous drummer Junpei was welcomed and drank together to discuss about new band. At that drink session, Junpei told us he had an idea of the name of new band, that was "Moth". For Japanese, it's hard to recognize the difference of "Moth" and "Moss". So I and Nobuyuki thought it's "Moss" and we told him "There are another band using that name!". We were totally drunk at that night, so without any serious thinking, we said "Well..., let's add Funeral!". A few days after, I and Nobuyuki realized that he meant "Moth"! Anyway, I think it's good name.

Who founded Funeral Moth and what were the reasons for starting it? When had it been started? Did the label 'Weird Truth Productions' play a role in the foundation of the band?

Makoto: First person who tried to start this band is Nobuyuki. He contacted me to create new doom band. At that time, I was played drums in black metal band Deathchurch, and he was in Coffins. So it was started as something like a project band. Then my old friend Junpei told me he was interested to join us and Funeral Moth was born. A little after, I was kicked out from Deathchurch and Nobuyuki left Coffins, so FM became our main band. Yes I'm running Weird Truth and releasing a lot of doom stuffs. So it's an advantage for band but it's not the main reason we started this band. I did doom project called Mourning Shadow around 2000 -2001 or so. Nobuyuki knew about that project and I'm into doom stuffs even if I play very fast black metal band at that time.

Speaking of the label, I am curious why you decided to release music with a certain emphasis on funeral doom? Why does it have such a fascination for you?

Makoto: When I started WT, I didn't any idea which genre I release through my label. WT was just a label to release my own one man band Nyarlathotep at that time. Then activities of Nyarlathotep became slower and slower little by little, and I started to release other bands who I like. First WT funeral doom release is a demo of Worship. I've been contacted with Mad Max for a while, and his label Impaler of Trendies was official distributor for my first release Nyarlathotep/Gnome split tape. In return, I released his band Worship's "Last Tape Before Doomsday" Japanese edition. When I make the jacket for that tape, Max sent me a mail and said "Please put the future release info on jacket" and there were the name of Mournful Congregation! MC's "Weeping" demo was my long time favorite but after the release of "An Epic Dream Of Desire" demo, I've not heard about them for a long time. So I thought they've already split up. Anyway, I was surprised by the news Worship would release the split with MC and I quickly sent a mail to Max and asked him to send me contact address of MC. Some years after, I released The Dawning of Mournful Hymns 2CD. Unfortunately Max passed away when it's out... Perhaps, it made big impact on people and WT started to be recognized as doom label. Anyway, I'm just releasing the stuffs I like, so there are many non doom stuffs on WT like Cauldron Black Ram, Stargazer, Transgressor, Throneum, Sanctifier, etc...

Judging from the Metal Archives, al of the band members of FM have side-projects. What would these be and is it difficult to meet for join forces for this funeral doom band?

Makoto: Besides Funeral Moth, now I'm playing in 2 bands. One is my solo project de-nihil(ex-Nyarlathotep). After split tape with Discrete Corporality 2006, I've not released any new stuffs yet. I'm stocking some ideas little by little to make new stuffs. But I have a lot of work for Funeral Moth and WT, so it's extremely slow as Funeral Moth music. The other band is new blackened doom band called Valkyrie I'm playing drums which was born in 2011. Nobuyuki is playing in metal crust band called Shattered Hell, and Yuichirou playing in grind band Brob. It's sure that it's difficult to find new person for playing such a extreme music, so we are sharing members here.

Are all members active in song-writing or is this something limited to a sole member? How often do you rehearse?

Makoto: Nobuyuki and I write the songs and all members arranging them. We rehearse once per week or 2 weeks.

Both of the tracks on your releases have lyrics, but one has them in Japanese, while the other comes with English ones. Why did you decide to use both languages and what would be the topic in 'Ignorance'?

Makoto: The Lyrics of Ignorance was written by Nobuyuki and DDoaDMD by me. Nobuyuki write lyrics in Japanese and I write in English. Nobuyuki like some Japanese hard core stuffs too, so his lyric was influenced by those stuffs. As for the lyrics of Ignorance, it's written about lust and corruption of soul.

Furthermore, why did you not offer a translation of the lyrics? Not many people speak Japanese and the online translators are by no means good.

Makoto: Sorry, it was bad service! By the way, we are working for re-releasing the EP on 12" vinyl with Chinese label Psychedelic Lotus Order. On the lyric sheet of 12" version, there are English translation of "Ignorance" and Japanese translation of "DDoaDMD". So please wait the release of it!

From your perspective:

What are the core essences of Funeral Doom and how does Funeral Moth fit into this? How would you describe your sound and style?

Makoto: Personally, I think Skepticism's music represents what Funeral Doom is. Solemn organ sound, dark atmosphere, and eerie mood, is essence for Funeral Doom and they have all of them. As for Funeral Moth, there are some elements of "Funeral Doom", but I personally regard our music as "Doom" simply. Compared to Skepticism, our music is much more emotional (especially newer songs we've not recorded yet), and there are no organ sound!

Is it challenging to compose music that progresses on such a slow pace? What about the aspect of counterpoints to the dark atmosphere, the use of samples and non-metal elements? Do you want to keep Funeral Moth as something that is strictly 'metal' or might it venture into more experimental realms?

Makoto: Yes, it's really challenging to play such a slow music! We must take care of the details of each notes. We are trying to make dynamism in our songs and avoid to be something like minimal music. We play our music in extremely slow pace, but riffs are metal-based ones. We don't want to use any non-metal elements for the present.

What about the contrast to your cultural environment. From a Western perspective, Japan looks like a hectic and in terms of the culture something we have difficulties in understanding. Is Funeral Moth some sort of a counterpoint to this; a rebellious – punkish? – refusal to play music that would reflect the hastiness of your days?

Makoto: Ha, ha... Yes, Japanese people works hard and our daily life goes very fast. Most of the people here tend to prefer faster songs than slow music like we play. But I think it's the same in other part of world, isn't it? Anyway, we are trying to play the music we like.

Is it difficult to play this type of music on stage? The timing and the slow tempo seem to be more crucial compared normal black or death metal bands for instance? How have the experiences on the stage been so far? Do you experiment when playing live or do you attempt to stick to the music as closely as possible?

Makoto: As I answered before, we must take care of each notes because people can recognize our mistake much more clearly than faster bands! We are playing our songs almost the same as recorded version, but there are a few differences of course. Especially, our drummer Yuichirou play different fills per each gigs. And we shared the stage with death metal, black metal bands many times, and in general we can use 30 minutes or so for one show. So we can play only 1 or 2 songs every time!

How large have the audiences for your band been so far? What kind of metal fans attend the concerts?

Makoto: In general, we play in small places and the crowd is about 20 to 100 or so. The biggest crowd was 100+ when we played with Worship in 2008 and with Mournful Congregation in 2010.

I am somewhat curious why you re-released your first demo tape with a different kind of sound? Were you not satisfied with the original? How would you describe the differences?

Makoto: In the end of 2008, Yuichirou was welcomed as new drummer and we planned to organize Worship shows in Tokyo and we supported them. At that time, first demo was completely sold out. So we thought some new stuffs for that shows but there were not so much time to make new songs and we re-recorded 2 songs on demo with new drummer. There are not so much differences in arrangements, but playing is much better than demo version I think.

How do you feel the earthquake and the nuclear catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi power plants has had an impact on Japan?

Makoto: Yes, it was very big impact here. My place Kanagawa is a little far from the hypocenter of earthquake, but I suffered big quake here and I saw electric light poles moved like a metronome! For a few weeks after the earthquake, there were total chaos here. It was difficult to buy some daily necessities like bread, gasoline, rice, and so on... And some people around my area moved to south part of Japan to escape from radiations from Fukushima.

Is it possible for you to name artists whose works deal with the ongoing crisis and do you feel that the Japanese culture could come up with something similar like they did in the aftermath of the WW2 and the Daigo Fukuryū Maru (第五福竜丸) incident?

Makoto: Sorry I don't know some artists who deal with the earthquake, Nuclear plant problems. Anyway, I think people in Tohoku(north part of Japan) rise again!

Do you consider yourself taking up this topic in one of the bands?

Makoto: For the present, I'm not going to use this topic for my bands. I'd like to write about what I experience in my daily life.

So far you have only released two tracks. What prevents you from spreading more? Do you have new music recorded? Is there a chance to see some new stuff appear soon?

Makoto: We have 4 songs besides 2 songs we have released. We are going to record them sometime in 2012, which will be first album.

In case someone is interested in contacting you or wants to listen to some of your music, what would you recommend? Where can you be found on the Internet?

Makoto: Please check our myspace page(www.myspace.com/funeralmoth). But by recent update, myspace became much worse than ever.... I'm still using old macintosh and it's really difficult to update it. So now I'm going to make official site. When I finish it, I'll put the link on myspace and update our news on that. Anyway, new myspace is really sucks....

Some closing words .. if you like:

Makoto: Thanks for this interview. In this last words, I must tell you we welcomed new guitar player in Funeral Moth as 2nd guitar player. His name is Mayo Odium who also plays in gothic metal band Stabat Mater and black metal band Ssorc. With addition of new guitar player, our music will be much more harmonic than past. Keep on doomin!

Bankeray

Greeting to Indonesia ... hopefully you guys are alright.

As you are in there far, well with us.

Who am I addressing and who are the current members?

Alta Karka, for now at Bass Antonimius Bagaskara, Izman Sebastian on lead guitar, Mayhanung Prabangkara on guitar and myself on vocals and additional drums, cause Arko Putut resign on January 2012.

Even though you give a reference on how your band name is supposed to be understood, why don't you explain it a bit? What had been the reasons for taking it? What does Bankeray actually mean?

Bankeray has no special meaning, because Bankeray tree is a name taken from Kalimantan, Indonesia. Them know about the Orang Utan? Together that's in the woods there. I like the adventure, the trees, then Bankeray (read: Bangkirai) why? We translate the philosophy that this tree is very strong, hard, resistant to termites, and is useful in some respects, one of the building and roots is a part of tree.

Please write a bit about the history of the band. You started under the monicker Choro Ngantuk (sleepy cockroach), right? Why did you pick this name, changed it then and why did you play the music that you do?

Initially we just want to have fun, make a band to fill in spare time. Without realizing some of the cockroach is like to be our friends throughout the day, even in bed, then we called "Choro Ngantuk" ... Hahahaha. Then we think need to replace it, because we are not a band of humor and that ultimately our souls chose to thrash metal with some touch of rock.



What bands would you refer to as influences? Do all band members have a similar musical background or are there differences?

Very much, God Bless the legendary rock Indonesia, Boomerang, Seringai, SuckerHead then there are from outside Indonesia: Metallica, Slayer, Motorhead, Misfits probably will not fit one page, so a lot of influence between Rock 'n Roll, Punk and Metal ... hahhaa. We were almost the same background, and listen to some kind of music is varied to be used as a reference.

How many release have you spread so far and what would be their titles?

Demo Bankeray self title in 2007 with 3 tracks, and singles in 2009 called Putrasetan, EP Jalur Tengkorak in 2011 and several compilation albums, such as Treack Tour and the Evil Space part1 compilation with Kemakil (UK)

According to your biography Putrasetan had been somewhat of a success? What does the song/single deal with? What makes it so special?

The song is taken from a horror movie, then we take the plot to be used as a song. Probably nothing too special here, but people loved it and we really appreciate what they choose

Jalur Tengkorak would be the title of your latest release. What would be the meaning in English? Why did you take it?

Jalur Tengkorak already in 2011 we released yesterday. In the EP format, and Jalur Tengkorak (in English "Skull Way"), tells of a street in our area who frequent traffic accidents. We tried to liftcases that exist around us to be a reference to the people to be careful on the streets.

Judging from the sounds the tracks have been taken from several recording sessions, right? So, how long did it take you to get it done and are you satisfied with the outcome? Did you use a professional studio for it?

Only a few weeks. Still a bit less satisfied, but the dirty sound that will look more rebellious. Track Putrasetan's guitar and bass in home recording, drums in the studio, and other tracks in the studio all of them.

You play some kind of unpolished kind of thrash metal, which is not too focussed on speed. Influences from punk and death metal appear as well ... do you think you have found your style already? What are the core essences of your music?

We find it even after we finish "Jalur Tengkorak" .. hahaha. We think we've become our own self, you may need to try to track new-day, but overall we were quite enjoying what we produce. We make music that is not in a hurry but still get people excited.

How have the responses been so far?

Our work that has been there is learning for the future.

Is this release distributed on CD or merely as a download? All of the tracks as well as the booklet are available on your homepage, correct?

Yes, we print it on CD as well, we even had time to share it at Rock In Solo when Death Angel comes to Solo, Indonesia last year. To download it is true we provide on our site, for those who want to try ..

What are the differences between your first demo and your latest output? How has the sound changed? Do you prefer a slightly raw sound?

Very different, in terms of vocal character, and may later be changed again. Sound is also very different, early demos that sounded even more raw .. hahaha.

Interestingly, you sing in Indonesian, your native tongue. Would you mind writing a bit about the lyrical background of your music? What do your songs deal with? Will you continue to write music in this language or might there be some writings in English in the future as well?

About life, nature, horror, and the streets. We are working together in it, for now still in the language of our pride, but we're preparing some songs in English, to further introduce Indonesia to the world.

Serdadu Indio has, according to the biography, a poem as lyrics. Is this a one-time experiment or do you plan to use of these for a future recording? What does the track actually deal with?

Yes, this was originally an experiment when my friend likes to create poetry, rather than wasted and then we took one to serve the song. Serdadu Indio, maybe we need a little Google translate, hahaha. About an unscrupulous injustice the State apparatus that applies to arbitrary small, especially against street vendors and so forth.

Judging from the pictures on your Internet pages you seem to have had some live experiences already? What has been the largest crowd that has attained a concert of you? Why don't you share some of your impressions? Is it easy to find places to play live over there?

Rock In Solo is the biggest event ever to be our opportunity to be part of it. But the most memorable reply when Smash Your Ass Tour 2010 in Karanganyar, Indonesia. Some parts in the event that we have uploaded on Youtube. Pretty easy. Many interesting venue here.

How do you see the metal scene in Indonesia anyway? Is it popular and is it easy to spread music in this particular style?

Wow, metal in Indonesia for the current trend of music has been like a young child, even though Korean girlband and boyband & some pop melayu still number one. But the rock and metal music already has its own place in society and quite popular. You know Burgerkill? They are one of the most popular here.

A good booze from Indonesia?

"CIU", you must try when visiting here. Mandatory ... hahaha

A dish someone should try when visiting your country?

Serabi, Pecel, Gudeg, Tempe, Ayam Betutu, many types of culinary in Indonesia. I am sure that your stomach will not be fit for the affairs of this one ... hahahah

Some local bands you would like to recommend?

"Down For Life, God Bless, Komunal, Burning Angel, Problem Overstay, Vaginal Mutilation, Rajasinga, Gigantor, Metallic Ass, Spirit of Life, Lelembut, Burgerkill, Seringai, Speedkill". A lot of good bands in Indonesia .. \m/

In case someone is interested in your music, how and where can this person buy your stuff?

Currently only available in Indonesia alone, and the most complete in the Maximum Rockshop. A distribution and possession Anton's (bassist) rockshop...: D

How can people get in touch with you?

Email to bankeraythrash@yahoo.com or maybe visit the website at www.bankeray.co.cc but we are more active on facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Bankeray> or follow Bankeray on Twitter: @Bankeray

Some closing comments if you like

Well, a dead spot in light. A magazine that is cool in my opinion, a lot of detail and extensive review, not just metal, many kinds of music are discussed here. I have the earlier editions, lots of interviews about things that are more complete discussion by great people like you. I really salute the independent media initiatives like this which certainly will help some of the bands from around the world to develop. Kudos to you and this zine, hopefully more successful and such a big hurry metalhammer or any others. Yeah!

Mordenom

Hey there ... how are times in Slovenia?

Fine. Thank you.

One question I generally tend to ask in an interview deals with the band name and its background. So, would you mind elaborating this aspect a bit?

The name itself doesn't mean anything in particular (it's not a disease or an Egyptian god). It is just a word formation that we came up with, quite late in the process of the band and music formation.

According to the Metal Archives, Mordenom was founded in 2004, but the first release only saw the light of day in 2009. Why did it take you so long to get it done? Have you been able to use all ideas from this time or do you have some tracks left over?

The band was founded somewhere in 2004. At that time, only 3 members were in the band: Rok, Marjan and I [Jernej; note from the editor]. If you add the fact that it is nearly impossible to find a decent musician in Slovenia, that would actually like the music that we play, then I would say that it was not such a super-long process. Even today, bands usually need 2-3 years on average to arrange a new record. It took us 4 years (2004-2008). In April 2008 we had our debut show, and from that point on, our songs were 90% completed. We booked the studio later that year, and in April 2009 Agnvs Dei was released. Again, we did not want to rush it. We just wanted the album to sound good.

We pretty much used up all the ideas from that time. We also recorded an additional track, which is a little bit different from the other tracks on Agnvs Dei, and is going to be featured on the next Mordenom album (hopefully).

What had been the most difficult part in getting started? Are you very critical of yourself and scrap a lot of ideas? Was the direction clear from the start?

The most difficult part? I don't know. Probably finding the band members. Nothing is difficult if you do it with passion. We are quite picky when it comes to music, arrangements and riffs, so many ideas were thrown away because we could not connect them into a single good track.

At the beginning the direction was only good extreme music. Nothing more.

Furthermore, why did you not release some demos previous to your debut album?

We actually did, for one song - Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation. But it was not released on any CD. It was made for Myspace purposes only. We recorded demo songs for all the tracks to get a clearer picture of the album before entering the studio. Those demos were not good enough for publishing. On the other hand, why lose the time for some shitty-sounding demos, if you can do a real album.

What about the band members? Were all those five involved right from the start? Is the song-writing a process all are involved in? Who is currently in the band anyway?

No. Most of the songs were written before Dušan and Deni joined the band. We could say they came into the "polishing" phase of the process. We all are open for new ideas and proposals. Some members show more initiative, others less.

Currently, the band only has three members: Marjan, Deni and I. Rok (guitarist) and Dušan (bassist) decided to end their band activities because of their family and business obligations. And we totally respect that.

The title of your sole release so far is 'Agnvs Dei'. How does this relate to your music and the concept you try to express? Did you have it in mind before you wrote the music or did it came later?

You can almost look at the title as a cynical view / take on the whole album. I think it describes the tone of the record pretty well but at the same time it's open to different interpretations.

It was chosen after the music and lyrics.

Judging from the way the tracks had been arranged, the album seems to be divided into two parts, or? When you read the lyrics, then a certain concept reveals itself. Would you mind elaborating this aspect a bit?

Certainly. The first half of the album is thematically more centred to the "Earth" aspect, where we ask ourselves about the meaning of life (Earthly) and its history (Purification), followed by a short encounter with death (Guardian). From here the journey takes us to the unknown territories (Mysterious) and then through the middle (Mediums), we face some sort of a transition into another state. In the second half we ask ourselves about the reality we live in (Conjecture) and manipulations we see (Blessing), which is followed by damnation (Final). The album ends with a departure into the unconscious bodiless wandering (Iron Gates). I hope this helps.

What had your reasons been for playing this kind of industrial or rather mechanical type of black/death metal?

I do not know. We simply like this type of extreme music. While forming the band, there were mainly thrash metal bands in Slovenia, with a few exceptions, so that was also one reason ... to get a more diverse representation of metal genres.

If you had to describe your music, then ... how would you do this? What are the core elements of your art?

A quick definition would probably be: death metal with influences of black and thrash metal. We could discuss it indefinitely. With Agnvs Dei, we covered a wide range of elements that can be found in heavy music. For example: catchy, yet not sweet melodic riffs, brutal vocals, blasting drums, atmospheric background, dynamic changes within the track and the album, melodic and shredding solos... You always have to balance them very carefully to get a recipe for a good track. I constantly have a feeling these days, that the new metal bands are trying to impress with super fast speeding songs, without having in mind that the music is not a car race. Still... speed is a very important element of metal music.

How do you see your art compared to the origin of the genres? Are these early days something you can appreciate as well or what are your preferences in terms of the music?

Each band develops its own direction over time. Have older bands influenced our music? Sure they have. We all appreciate old metal bands and respect their contribution to the music, because they were the pioneers of their time. Everything evolves, and so does music. Sometimes I have to go back and absorb some more ideas from the 80's and 90's to boost my inspiration.

Are you able to keep track of the developments in the metal world or do you think there are simply too many releases today?

Honestly I am no longer in the course of events in today's metal scene. There are simply too many releases these days. I usually find good new bands through recommendations of my colleagues.

Interestingly, the booklet comes with a fancy design and appears well crafted; I liked the reference to Pan's Labyrinth – a really good movie. Who was responsible for it and did you develop the ideas in the process of crafting the music?

The idea was a joint effort of artist Žiga Kroflič and our guitarist Marjan Krajačič. The booklet was created on basis of the lyrics and the interpretation of Žiga's feelings regarding the lyrics. We only gave him a few directions, but the rest of the work was completely in his hands. We wanted a design by someone who wasn't in the band, since everything else was produced by us.

How have the responses from the media and the fans been so far?

The responses were above all expectations. If we take reviews, they were all pretty much highly ranked. If I remember correctly, the lowest ranking was 8/10. And there were quite a few... Fans also seem to like it... In the end, we are very proud of our album.

You seem to have had some concerts and even played on a festival. How have these experiences been? What kind of people attend your gigs? Is it just the black/death crowd or are you able to reach out to fans of other genres as well?

I would say it was ok. There were almost always some technical issues. Cable problems, monitor problems, time limitations... that affects your performance. I guess it is just a part of the fun but from the audience perspective it was great. We always got a good response. Our crowd is mainly metal-oriented. You will not find hip hop, techno or pop listeners in our audience. The biggest turnoff for the wider audience in the extreme metal genres is the vocals (growling). They just can't swallow it.

On your MySpace page you explain in an interview that you had been able to recover a fifth of the money you had originally invested in it. This sounds pretty hefty. Has this ratio improved a bit since? Why did you decide to release the debut by yourself anyway? A lot of bands cannot wait to get the help of a label.

He-he, no, the ratio is still the same. Especially because we had only a few gigs. As Derek Roddy says: "If you want to earn money with the music do not play death metal". The label thing is pure economy. If they invest money in you, they will want it back. And we just did not find a proper investor. We sent some promo CDs but we either did not get any answers, or the answer was "Hey guys your music is super cool, but unfortunately we can't give you an offer right now because we have obligations to the other bands in our label. Maybe next time". So the answer is quite simple

- because there was no one who would invest into us, we had to invest in ourselves.



Do you have some plans for a new recording? Are some new tracks already written or even recorded? Will the future music be more progressive with more solos or what kind of plans do you have in mind?

Yes. We are just in the middle of demo recording for our second album. Many tracks have been written so far, some of them even recorded. We are planning a double CD. The first disc will be more death metal oriented, and the second one is going to be one long "concept" track, not so brutal but more melodic, and atmospheric – maybe closer to Agnvs Dei. We are very excited. The material sounds promising.

How would you describe the Slovenian metal scene? Are there some bands you can recommend?

It is getting bigger by the day. What bothers me is that every band with the potential to succeed seems to be able to record one single CD, and then breaks up.

That is why I have a total respect and recommend bands like: Noctifera, Negligence, Obnounce, Sabaium, Dekadent and some others. I can also point out some bands with a potential, like: Memphistophelian, Inmate, Penitenziagite, Neurotech, Keller, Condemnatio Cristi and others. I would really love to hear something from these bands - before they break up.

Judging from the pictures you have made available on your MySpace profile, you do not seem to use corpse paint. Also the all too common imagery of the black metal scene can hardly be found. Therefore, why do you avoid these aspects?

Because it is immature and childish, he-he. I think the music has to do the work. I can't imagine having to spend 10 minutes for makeup before the show and then again to wash it off. Especially in our small clubs with no privacy. There was not even a debate in the band whether we should have corpse paint or not.

From your perspective:

why is there no real leftist black metal and why is it that this genre has to deal with such an influx of ns-ideology?

I have never thought about music through various ideologies, so it is a kind of a tough question. It must have some connections with the burning of churches in Norway and Burzum's extreme ideologies, which is why this metal genre got a bad connotation. If someone wants to spread his extreme beliefs, then the music is a very convenient tool to do it. And then, over time, other ideologies were pasted onto this genre. So, if we return to the question why there is no leftist black metal, I would simply say it is so because no one yet used it in that way.

Is there any chance to hear music from you sung in your native tongue?

No. I don't think so. You can't imagine how stupid that would sound

Do you have some music available for purchase?

Of course. Here is the link: <http://mordenom.com/index.php/order>

How can someone contact you? What Internet sites do you use?

You can contact us here:

http://mordenom.com/index.php/Agnvs_Dei

<http://www.myspace.com/mordenom>

<http://sl-si.facebook.com/pages/MORDENOM/329790036647>

<http://www.reverbnation.com/mordenom>

Or just email us: mordenom@gmail.com

Some closing comments if you like

\m/

Kaoteon (old)

(as the original interview from the year 2008 is not available at the Circle of Destruction site any more, I will use my own magazine to post it again)

Greetings, please introduce your band. Where are you from? Tell us about your motivation to start it. When was it formed and how came all into existence?

Anthony: I started the band to bash the bastard nations and that's where the members and I meet the most.

Walid: We're from Lebanon. We are a band that writes about war and terror because we have the right to! We live it every day, we're not just brats who wish to sound evil or dark.

How have the first days of your band in Libanon been? How have you been able to play music, create a local fanbase and also to record music?

Walid: We've always been honest to ourselves when it comes to music. Just create what you feel like doing, play it, and perform it for the sake purpose of self-satisfaction and that seems to be working just great. The fanbase is great and supportive and we wouldn't ask for more.

Anthony: Throughout the years, I found no better way to express myself beside composing kaoteon's music. Kaoteon is honest. We are straightforward by all means and not a bunch of trendy assholes. This is why we've been there and we'll remain.

In terms of evolution over the years, how would you describe the path Kaoteon has taken. What has changed and what has become new?

Anthony: We live in a Kaotik Eon, a lot has changed and that will show in the near future.

Walid: We matured musically. The new album will be out soon and you can compare it to the old tracks and judge for your self.

Why did you choose to play black metal in the first place? What does this genre mean to you and why do you prefer it among all others?

Anthony: The atmosphere found in Black metal inspires me the most but we are far from being a pure black metal band.

Walid: We actually play extreme metal, a mixture of black and death metal. This genre represents who we are as individuals, and we find it the most suitable to express our feelings and visions.

Describe us the situation in terms of metal and other Western music in your country. How has it been and has it changed over the years? Does your government or local authorities try to shape the culture along their 'agenda' and give metal bands a hard time in particular?

Walid: Metal music is forbidden in Lebanon, and a lot of bands and individuals have suffered because of that. Ordering Metal related items is forbidden, and previously, performing was also forbidden and against the law. But then again, all this only made us more determined to keep on supporting Metal music, and fighting for it.

Is it possible for you to play live in Libanon or do you have to leave the country for that? What could one expect when seeing you live and how have the reactions of fans been so far? How many concerts did you have so far and where took they place?

Anthony: I wish we could take our performance and scar it in the minds of foreign metal heads as I never saw a more intense delivery from a three piece band.

Walid: Performing live now is possible, although the sound is always terrible due to the lack of financial support in the Lebanese Metal scene.

Watching Kaoteon live is a true carnage, it's the most violent thing you can ever expect/see. The fans are always supportive and motivating.

All our concerts have been in Lebanon so far.

Iranian bands have some problems to distribute music, because their packages are searched by the post services; Halla had to take a lot of precautions to send me their music. Is something similiar happening in your country? How are you able to obtain metal music from the West?

Walid: We have the same situation here and the only way to obtain or send music is through the internet.

How do you distribute your own music and what kind of copies would fans be able to get from you? CD-r, professional pressed CDs, tapes, vinyl?

Walid: Locally it's through CD-rs and online music. Internationally it's through pressed CDs (previously through the old label we were signed to), or online music.

Does the situation in your country effect the way you write music? Is some of that reflected throughout your lyrics or do you rather avoid to let the environment influence them?

Anthony: My country and I are one and that is why I scream for vengeance each time it bleeds.

Walid: It is a major influence to the music and lyrics in Kaoteon.

Please enlighten us on your influences; music, literature or art in general.

Walid: Personally it's old Lebanese patriotic/resistance music, Metal music, some post-rock music, life as we know it, and literature.

Anthony: I believe that I am an eccentric person with an eclectic taste, however, I favor that which is real and of meaning rather than the nominal and nonchalant.

Could you give us some impression on the current situation in Libanon. Now that this country is off the monitors of the large media corporations, it is hard to get some information from there.

Walid: We're currently at the calm before the big storm, we expect things to be calm for a year or two before another rampage.

Anthony: Indeed.

2006 a photo from Beirut won the photo of the year award:

<http://www.worldpressphoto.org/>

http://www.worldpressphoto.org/images/photocache/photos/Since%201955/2006_745x345x90.jpg

Title:

Young Lebanese drive through devastated neighborhood of South Beirut, 15 August

additional text:

After a long morning walking through the rubble of a bombed Beirut and documenting people returning to what was left of their homes, Platt saw the red convertible out of the corner of his eye and had only a few seconds to capture the moment.

How common is this for Libanon or Beirut in particular? What are your impression of this picture?

Walid: That's very common in Lebanon, all over Lebanon actually. The impressions of this picture? 4 disgustingly disgusted air-heads driving through a post-war area.

Towards the end of the interview:

Which albums (metal/non-metal) do you see as essential?

Walid: Dissection - Storm of the Light's Bane, Hypocrisy - Osculum Obscenum, Emperor - All, Morbid Angel - A to D, Immolation - Close to a World Below, Misery Index - Discordia, Nevermore - This Godless Endeavor, Sacramentum - Thy Black Destiny, Testament - The Gathering, Vital Remains - Dawn of the Apocalypse, Suffocation - Despise the Sun.

Anthony: I'll add to the great bands mentioned by my brother Walid; Bathory, Slayer, Burzum, Mayhem, Megadeth among a whole lot of other great bands that are too many to count.

What other bands from Libanon should we give a try?

Walid and Anthony: Kimaera, Postmortem.

How can people contact you? Where can they get your releases?

Walid: www.myspace.com/kaoteon www.metalje.com/kaoteon

Final words, please.

Walid: Keep on supporting Metal, keep those horns up, and keep on screaming your lungs out. Veni Vidi Vomiu.

Anthony: SPREAD THE KAOS.

Kaoteon (2012)

Note from the editor: the names had been shortened to reduce the space they would otherwise have taken.

Anthony = Anthony Kaoteon; Ziad = Ziad Blast; Walid = Walid WolfLust

Hey, it is nice to have an interview with you again. Who am I 'talking' to and what role do you play in Kaoteon?

Anthony: Good day, it's good to hear from you as well! I am responsible for the adrenaline shots that motivate the guys to push their limits after our hectic daily jobs and release the brain damaging tunes to the masses. I mainly compose the music, set the tone to be delivered on the Guitars while handling communication most of the time with the support of my brothers in KAOTEON.

Ziad: Hey this is Ziad, and I'm the drummer.

Walid: I'm WolfLust and I do my best to disturb you through my vocals and lyrics.

When you look back at the years when you started your band, then what has changed since then? How did Kaoteon develop?

Anthony: When I started KAOTEON, all I wanted was to play a live concert, then I wondered if we'd ever be able to record original tracks, then we released the first demo through several underground labels and distros around the world and that made us the first metal band to release anything internationally in the Middle East and Region beside bands from Occupied Palestine and it was a great honor to receive praise from different continents! This definitely made us realize that hard work and dedication do pay off and we can get KAOTEON to be listed in the Line Up of a label which had inspiring bands such as the legendary OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS that released our debut album VENI VIDI VOMUI. KAOTEON developed from a one man band playing his guitars in his room to the first band in the Middle East, GCC and Region to be on the same label that released monster bands like IMMORTAL, SAMAEI, MARDUK, IMPALED NAZARENE amongst great others.

Ziad: I joined the band in 2006. At that period of time we started composing and playing gigs which then led to the recording of VVV.

Walid: Every member of Kaoteon has matured musically, luckily in the same direction, and this can be noticed in the difference between the Provenance of Hatred tracks, the newer tracks on VVV, and what we're currently writing together.

Has it become easier to play extreme music like yours or have the repercussions by the authorities – being they political or religious – remain the same?

Anthony: Yesterday I was watching a local TV program spotting the light on a demon-like tattoo and mentioning that people start to do these things when they get lost and listen to "loud" music, that explains I guess!

Ziad: Well it depends on the authorities, sometimes they concentrate on destroying the metal scene and sometimes they don't give a shit about it. It depends on the socio-political atmosphere in the country.

Walid: Same shit, different day; we can't care any less.

It is somewhat interesting that with Blaakyum a band from the early days has just released a new album; Lord of the Night. Sadly, 2011 only five have been releases by the Lebanese metal scene. Is there a chance to see it thrive in the future or are other genres simply too popular? Seems to be some sort of 'neglected child' from here.

Anthony: As long as there is no real support for bands to play concerts to make enough money and release new material, there will never be enough quality releases because it takes a whole lot from every member of the band to get a record done in this war torn, economically fucked up country. All the best to Blaakyum that are an example of a band taking too long to get their album released.

Walid: I actually believe that 5 releases in a single year is an excellent thing for a country like Lebanon. Our Metal scene is really too small compared to other countries, I'd say we've done a good job managing to release 5 albums in 2011.

What bands are there active right now? Is it possible for you to present the readers with some kind of overview of the ongoing developments?

Anthony: You have Kimaera that are doing their best to stay active by playing concerts and recording new material under the doom/death genre. You will hear soon about a new band by postmortem's vocalist that I am looking forward to hear their anticipated thrash/death record. Blaakyum just released their debut Heavy/Thrash metal album and I heard Bloodink changed their style and will release something with balls this time so I am looking forward for that one too. I am not sure if Kvlt or Nocturna are doing anything!

Walid: As a matter of fact Nocturna are in the process of mastering their full length album, and Melankoly are also finishing their upcoming release.

How would you describe the music scene anyway? Is it possible to point to some dominant trends?

Anthony: The Metal scene is down the shitter but few bands are rising above it and delivering some amazing results, you've got the breakcore, dnb, dubstep scene which is developing and gathering old metal fans around it, then you have the indie rock and hard rock bands that are actually getting some attention with their new releases from the region.

Walid: The positive side is that we don't have any emo/screamo/gay-ass hair-gel wanking bands.

When it comes to distributing music, then how it is done in Lebanon. It seems natural that the 'accepted' music – like from the Rotana network for instance – might be spread via local shops, but as the metal scene plays comparatively more extreme music, how do the band deal with this aspect; especially when it comes to more professional printed material?

Anthony: Sales in Lebanon are directly through the band members or friends - Feel free to get in touch with us at <http://www.facebook.com/KAOTEON> if you'd like an original CD of VVV in the Lebanese territory.

Your lyrics are in Arabic as well as in English. Is it easier for you to express yourself in the former language? Is there a difference in the sound and style, when you do not use the lingua franca? How do your fans react to this?

Anthony: I do not deliver the lyrics but I enjoy the Arabic lyrics immensely as do the fans.

Walid: I personally find it easier to express in English lyrics since they're easier to perform on a record. The Arabic language by nature is a harsh language, imagine how harsh it would be to scream your lungs out in such a language. The fans' approach to our Arabic songs was overwhelming.

One aspect strikes me as curious about your band: unlike a lot of (black) metal projects in the West and also in the East, most of them avoid social topics. Merely the usual topics are being dealt with: Satan, Anti-Christianity, Lovecraft etc. It is rare to find someone as outspoken as you. Why do you not remain silent? Has extreme metal the potential to become a medium for the rising anger and disillusion in the West as in the East?

Anthony: I once wrote on our Myspace "KAOTEON (Kaotik Eon) has no political nor religious goals but musical, social, philosophical and chaotic views. I believe that metal music is about self awareness, wisdom and knowledge. It is supposed to open our minds not close it." - I don't see a reason to offend religious deities and disrespect the beliefs of others but rather we point out the corruption and crimes infecting our world and hiding behind big religious titles that their own god would severely punish if there was justice in this world.

Walid: Black Metal has always been a philosophy. It's there to deliver a message regarding a subject that stands against our morals and basics. At the moment our days are getting raped through our social topics. If you dissect our lyrics properly you will notice that we did not spare political figures, war criminals, and some foul men of religion. Every wrongdoer will get a piece of my mind.

How is your way of expressing yourself been received by the fans? Is there a difference between your local cultural environment and the one outside of it?

Anthony: We've been hailed as an honest straightforward band free from bullshit for both our music and lyrics from all fans... Whoever bashed our sound was either a fan of ridiculous metal music or a fan of ridiculous radical movements that we actually do not care for their opinion or taste.

Do you feel that art, such extreme as you are playing, can have an impact on a society? Would you not agree that the level on which you play metal limits your audience to some degree? Or is this an aspect you do not seem to care about? Art for arts sake, no matter what?

Anthony: Nuclear warfare can't cause minor injury and we chose extreme metal as our weapon of choice with KAOTEON. We do listen and play other genres of music but I don't think that KAOTEON's message can be delivered in a different tone! We'll find a way to break the limits anyway.

Walid: Extreme situations call for Extreme Music and the times we live in deserve Extreme Metal. Kaoteon is a Metal warmachine and I don't think that the fuel that rages this machine will be extinguished within our lifetime.

In his book 'Heavy Metal Islam' Mark Levine discusses how Islam and modern types of music (Hip-hop, punk, rock and metal) work as vehicle to transport messages that can be used to bring social change. What is your opinion about this area of conflict? Is such really possible?

Anthony: I didn't read the book and don't think I will so I can't give my opinion about it, however, Islam, Christianity or any other religion can do nothing without the actual human mind that is perceiving them and change will only occur when the people realize that all hands bleed red when cut and all bodies fall when decapitated and all hearts are warm when treated with mutual respect and open mindedness disregarding race, religion, color and all the differentiating factors that are used to create wars and increase profits!

What about pro-Islam metal? We have bands that are screaming with verve against the existence of Christianity in the West, what about a counter narrative from the 'Middle East'? Do you think such is likely to happen at some point?

Anthony: Just like existing stupid radical lyrics of any side, all is possible as long as ignorants are still walking this earth.

Walid: I personally don't think that Metal is the right medium to preach for religions. Not at all!

Do you feel that the ongoing struggles in several countries through the Maghreb and the Middle East will have an impact on the metal music and the topics they deal with? Are there already bands, maybe even in Lebanon, which deal with these issues and try to bring them up?

Anthony: I have a great concern on what will happen in the coming year. This is not happening by chance and new regimes that are taking over do not seem to make a positive change. The strategic cold war for power between Turkey and Iran with the support of Russia and USA can actually ignite a Nuclear World War on the long run.

Walid: I've heard many bands from the burning regions of our world and I don't think they deliver their message like they should. I see no enragement, no disgust, no anger.

The pictures from Cairo and Tunisia – to name two prominent examples – had been impressive. What would be your opinion on these struggles? Do you see a chance towards a more just and open society?

Anthony: So Far, So Bad, So Fucked!

Walid: Cairo is a lost cause. Most of our regimes need to be impaled but I think that many countries are delivering themselves from one tyrant to another.

Veni, Vidi, Vomui would be the title of your latest output. It is your debut album and it would be interesting to know some of the background of it. How long did it take you to get it done? Did you ideas from previous recordings and how did the connection with Osmose Recordings came to happen?

Anthony: I started working on VVV from early 1998 and it was done long before it was released except for a couple of tracks added and a couple that were dropped as Walid, Ziad and I decided in the end. Ziad, our blasting drummer, made the difference when he joined the band and we were able to record the first soundtrack of this Kaotik Eon. Osmose liked our demo when it was released and asked us to send our material whenever we have anything ready and after several years we actually did so with the support of

Ashmedi Melechesh who is a dear friend of mine and a contract was sent to be signed. VVV got us several deals from different labels but to be on the lineup of a label as big as OSMOSE will always be a great honor.

How would you describe the music on it? What are the core essences of Kaoteon's art?

Anthony: If it were a drug, few people would be able to inject it without having an overdose. It is intense as fuck, honest as hell and delivers straightforward extreme black death metal that doesn't sound like just another clone band. In the future, things may change but we'll forever be 100% Mental, 100% Metal!

Walid: Kaoteon is enraged by the shit that surrounds our daily lives. Our days are far more hectic than most Western brats can ever imagine, also, Metal music is a passion of ours. For these reasons and many more, we'll always do honest as fuck Extreme Metal music which resonates the sound of our nuclear aeon.

Are you satisfied with the result and how have the responses been? Do you feel that your band is still perceived as exotic, as you come from a small scene, or has this changed a bit?

Anthony: We just wish we're able to leave our businesses behind and live decently on the road playing gigs and festivals, other than that, almost all responses were great, especially from extreme metal fans. I can remember three bad reviews of no importance since the release of our demo to date out of a whole great bunch of amazing reviews from great sources. I can't judge how the band is perceived since we are stuck in Lebanon but I believe that with our second record, we'll scar the metal history book for good!

Walid: We're very pleased with the results so far and the fans have been very supportive. We're nothing without their dedication and it's for this minority that we'll keep delivering our sick tunes.

Do you plan to release some new music soon?

Anthony: we do plan but we can never tell what's tomorrow hiding for us in this forsaken country.

Walid: We're already working on new material. Anthony and Ziad have one song ready and it sounds heavy as hell's screams.

Where can folks buy your music from?

Anthony: Our label Osmose Productions and their partners around the world www.osmoseproductions.com and from band members in Lebanon <http://www.facebook.com/KAOTEON>

How can people get in touch with you?

Anthony: Through our Facebook page that you can share with your sickest selection of metal friends <http://www.facebook.com/KAOTEON> or send an email to KAOTEON@GMAIL.COM

Some closing comments ... if you want

Anthony: Every bit of support counts! Spread the Kaos by joining us on our official facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/KAOTEON> and/or by purchasing our album from www.osmoseproductions.com

Walid: Thank you for supporting Extreme Metal and Underground music. We hope to destroy your stages one day. Cheers and keep the fucking flame burning \m/

Combat Noise

Your band is not particularly young with the first release dating back to 1996. Why don't you write a bit about the early days? Had it been difficult to form a band? Are there still some of the founding members left?

The conditions to found a metal band in Cuba are very uncertain. In the 90s it was like that and it is still the same. In the shops you may find musical instruments to play Rumba, Salsa and Caribbean music, but it is impossible to buy guitars for metal and distortion pedals for them. Amps are not sold, not cymbals and drums devices. We depend on outside friends that send guitar strings, picks, cables. Here you can't find shops to buy metal CDs or Metal T-shirts either. You may find them in the black market, but they are very expensive and scarce. Music is exchanged, as posters and magazines...For example an mp3 CD arrives in Havana and after a month it's in the other provinces. It is very difficult to download music from internet cos it only exists in places where we got no access, besides, the connection is too slow. It is also a big problem to find a rehearsal place. You can imagine if it's difficult or not making a Metal band and keep it live for years. Combat Noise still got 3 of its founders thou

What about the status of metal in Cuba? How has it been when you started your band and how has it changed since then? Does music from your island have a peculiar touch or sound? Is there some kind of predominant style?

The most important change appears when the government created the Cuban Rock Agency in 2008 which opened the doors for many bands to enter money. I don't think the metal that made in Cuba has a specific sound like the Swedish Death Metal, or the Norwegian Black Metal, for example.

There is too much Metal Core in Cuba now, but is a matter of a new wave. I hope it will disappear like Grunge and Nu Metal. Death and Black came long ago, but to stay, and in Cuba they still have a respectful audience.

The history of metal in Cuba dates back over two decades; Zeus' 1989 demo would be the first entry in this database (Metal Archives) for this country. Would you mind writing a bit about the history of metal in Cuba and how it has changed over the years? Furthermore, what would be the status of the early bands today? Are they still praised and is their music available?

Combat Noise has a lot to thank Zeus. Watching them in their concerts gave us the idea of making a Metal band. Then we had the chance to share the rehearsal space and there was a time where we had to use their amps, when ours got out of order. They were also the first ones that invited us to play in 1996. From the 90s there are still bands like that keep on playing with good approval from the public. In Havana there was a place named "Patio de María" with capacity for 500 metal heads. It's opened in 1988 and was closed by the government in 2003. The History of our scene is stamped with the name of Resistance, by the perseverance of its musicians, the scarcity of resources and the will of keep on going forward.

How is metal perceived by the non-metal audience in your country? Are there collaborations with between these two fractions?

The population despises Metal and find it noisy, they reject us for our image and attitude. The spaces the government has given us for making concerts have been achieved by our scene thru blood and fire.



According to the biography you sent me via e-mail, you describe your music as "War Death Metal." What are your reasons for picking this particular name? How do you try to express this throughout your music? Do you want to separate yourself from the War Black Metal, which is at times associated with the NS-scene; through the use of imagery/symbolism/topics for instance?

We play Death Metal in the vein of the old school from Florida. We say War

Death Metal because our image, stage design, and mainly our lyrics, about the war subject. Our music is violent, devastating, and sometimes chaotic, like the belic confrontation. We consider it a perfect background for the soldier in the battlefield. We got nothing to do with fascist topics. Our lyrics show the horrors of the war such as they are; we take no political party at all. The protagonists of our lyrics are Russian soldiers like in "Sniper is in position", marines like in "Paratroopers", or the Iraq resistance as in "AK47", Panzers that steer forward as in "The Black troops of death", Japanese suicidal pilots like in "Kamikaze".etc.

I hope I am asking not too much, but would you mind writing a bit about your albums? (Background, topics, kind of music, amount of copies – in case you know them)

Marching of Terror (1996); Soldiers Must Like to Kill (1998); For Military Supremacy (1999); Awakening in Holocaust (2001); Radical with the War Enemy (2002); Under My Rifle's Fire (2003); After the War... the Wrath Continues (2004); Brutality is in Command (2007); Frontline Offensive Force (2010)

"Marching to devastation" in 1996 is a Death Metal demo with some industrial strokes in cassette format which we released 50 copies. "Soldiers must like to kill" is a single we recorded in Finland in 1998 and we brought only 20 copies in Cd format. The next year I met Juan Formel, leader of the most important Salsa music band in Cuba, Van Van. He gave us the chance of recording "For Military Supremacy" in his studios so we put out 50 copies in tape format. In 2001 we did "Awakening in Holocaust" here we are taking back the strokes of industrial sounds and the lyrics are about a planet devastated by a super nuclear war and the climate change, everything concerning the attempts against USA, on September 11th of that same year. The cover is the classical photo where a second civil plane crashed to the World Trade Center. Also in tape format and also around the 50 copies we put out.

"Radical with the war enemy" followed after where we are bringing back the old school Death Metal with grind touches which has been the way we have kept up to date. Its lyrics are inspired in the invasion of US to Afghanistan and it became the first demo we released in CD format. In 2003 went out "Under My Rifles fire" single about the Vietnam War. All of these recordings were produced and distributed by Combat Noise itself in concerts and national fests. We never sent any copy out of the island. From that time on we considered it was time of letting the band be known out the National environment, and in 2004 we recorded a 10 song CD "After the War... The Wrath Continues". This Cd included 2 clips that were being played in national TV. We gave it to the Mexican label American Line Prods that after a little delay put out 500 copies in 2007. "Brutality is in Command" it doesn't exist, was an optional name for the future album, but we never used that.

In 2009 we recorded "Frontline Offensive Force" which went out in 2010 (Brutal Beatdown Recs from France). We received very good critics from international fanzines and specialized magazines as Metal Hammer, Metallium, Rock Hard, Terrorizer, Close Up...etc. Besides the offer of releasing a re-edition with the labels Old Cemetery Recs and Butchered Recs from US that put out 1000 copies in 2011. In this February 2012 we have just finished our new proposal "Anthems of Carnage" so we are in mixing and mastering process for the American label Seared Recs, who offered us to release the album. We have just received the proposition from the French label Legion of Death /Armee de la Mort to release 300 copies of 5 unpublished songs on 7EP, so after finishing the mastering "Anthems..." we will go back to Marine Studios, where we have done our recent productions.

Have you been able to reach out to fans outside of Cuba with your early releases? In case this would be true, how have the responses been?

To get any of these materials you may contact the labels "American Line Recs" en www.alprods.net y por "Old cemetery Recs" en www.oldercemetery.org Or just Combat Noise itself.

You also appeared on Cuban television, right? How this did came to happen and is it normal for metal bands to appear on a show or program? Does this kind of music receive support from the government or local authorities? What about radio shows? Do these play metal on a regular basis?

There is a TV program called "Cuerda Viva" of our national television. It goes out on air on Sundays from 6.00pm to 7.00pm and is dedicated to the underground music. There you may watch Metal, Hip Hop or electronic music of national proposal. Most of the Metal bands appear 2 or 3 times the year. This program organizes popularity contests which prizes are to record a video clip freely. It also makes an annual fest and a big concert called the Longest Rock which takes almost 24 hours without stopping. It has been more than a decade that the AHS foundation was created for the support of any underground art variants with an office (like a culture house) in every province. They have the money support to organize gigs and fests around the country like Ciudad Metal, Cyber Metal, Caiman Rock, Brutal fest, Atenas Rock...etc. Those fest are free of cost for the bands, I mean hotels, food, or transportation. In the capital there are some little spaces on the national radio stations for Rock and Metal like "Sabarock" or "Megalomania". Every time we go to a fest out of the capital is obvious they take you to their radio station to promote the gig with our music.

What strikes someone are the titles of your tracks. Are your lyrics a response to the embargo on Cuba by the United States or do you deal with these topics from a broader and universal perspective?

Our lyrics are not a response to the embargo against our country. They are written, as you well say from a universal perspective.

By the way, do you print the lyrics in your albums? Or do they remain hidden?

In our demos the lyrics were always there. They also appear in our CDs as well as the pictures, recording information, greetings, etc.

From your perspective, why does the metal scene experience such a rise in the right wing spectrum, while leftist topics often remain untouched?

The most constant lyrics in Metal are fantastic, belics, gore, epics, porno, satanic, misanthropic...the least are of extreme right, politically speaking. What i really like from Metal is the intensity of its music, lyrics are mostly crap. One of my favourite songs of all times has been "Angel of Death" of Slayer, lyrics inclusive, and i have never asked myself if it is fascist or not. It's a lyric that accompanies the music and for that i like it. Many tracks from Napalm Death are anti-capitalist system, of social criticism, and i never ask my self that those topics are Communist or from the left hand. In Metal scene only NS-Black Metal bands are openly Nazi. They support xenophobic, racial hatred, and wanted back the III Reich days. But, these bands are just a minority, so i do not consider that right hand topics are a priority within the Metal scene.

Why death metal and why such an extreme form of it? What makes it so fascinating for you to play this type of music over all these years?

For me Death Metal is the heaviest and most brutal music existing on Earth. I am a passionate of the extreme Metal, so i do not see myself playing melodic Metal on Gottemburg style or Metal Core. My favourite bands play Death Metal and they keep the image and attitude I assume since I was a teenager. Many bands have changed with the time, but i do not follow new trends, my principles keep on being those of Old School Death Metal.

When you started the band, what music did you listen to back then and how has this changed since? Do you prefer the modern interpretations or are you somehow stuck in the old days?

By 1995 we were not used to listen to thrash and Speed Metal so much as the beginning of the 90s. When we made the band, we were more motivated by Death Metal. Nowadays I m used to revisiting the discography of Death Metal pioneers and I prefer their first albums. But there are other bands like Vomitary, Behemoth, Hate Eternal or Nile, that every time they release anything I like them more.

How do I have to understand your logo? Why do you have these two additional lines in there? It confuses me somehow.

Our logo was designed by Crislayme of INHUMAN DRAWING in 1996; the name of the band can be easily read. I don't know what can confuse you. The two bars that you said mean nothing specifically. From my point of view that bars only give an identity to the logo. It's like the bar in the Asphyx logo. Or the extreme stretched and sharpened as the Metallica's logo... They mean nothing either.

Is it easy for you to have a concert in Cuba? How large are the crowds in general? Did you have had a chance to play outside of your home country?

In Havana there is a place for concerts called Maxim Rock and has the capacity for 600 persons. There are metal concerts on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. In the inside of the country there are concerts and fests where the local bands invited us, or the AHS. Of course those fests bring bigger amount of audience, they take like 3 or 4 days and Metal guys go from all over he country. Last year we sent our last CD to Curby of Obscene Extreme in Czech Republic and we were invited to play on his fest, but the delay of the procedures for the passport of the Cuban ministry of Culture made us cancel the trip. Damned bureaucracy ended up with our dream; anyway we will keep on trying it. You may go out of the country but the problem for us is the money for the plane tickets which are impossible to get in Cuba.

Do you have some releases available right now? What about the old demos? Is it still possible to buy them or is there a chance of a reprint?

Our two records are available in American Line Recs on www.alprods.net and in Old Cemetery Recs on www.oldcemetery.org. In about 3 months you will also be able to get the 3rd one. By this time we have no intention of reediting our demo tapes, maybe in the near future when we are more known in the international scene and someone gets interested in what we did.

How can someone contact you?

Now we are rebuilding our web site so you may write to us to noiseofcombat@agmai.com

You can watch our videos:

--Video Clip "Platoon"

<http://www.brutalbeatdown.com/2009/12/video-platoon-combat-noise/>

--Video Clip "Psychobelic"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1JagjigMwE>

Some closing comments if you like.

I want let clear something. The spaces we have achieved on the radio, TV, AHS, or Maxim Rock... we have them, not by the grace of government. We have got it by blood and fire. The history of Metal in Cuba is full of intolerance, humiliation and repression by the police. In Cuba everything belong to the State and the bands had to unite forces with promoters, fanzines editors and also the audience, just to get some conversations with the government and the local authorities, to demanded respect and support upon legal basis to get these spaces. To finish this interview i would like to thank this magazine for supporting COMBAT NOISE and give us the chance to appear in its pages. Stay brutal and underground.

Wainas

Hello there ... I hope you are alright and ready for some questions.

Finnish is not only a strange language, it is also one not many are able to speak, so why don't you offer a translation of your band name? Is „Kanttori Wainaa“ your real name or a pseudonym that plays on the band name in some respect? Or is it the other way around?

The word Wainas is very old Finnish and it means a dead corpse. Kanttori Wainaa is my pseudonym. I have always used pseudonyms to identify my music better.

Is Wainas your first band? Why did you decide to start it after all? Had there been album that made you start it?

Wainas is not my first band. I wanted to make some “dark music” so I started this project.

By that time I listened a lot of doom, dark and death metal. For example Finnish bands like Ajattara and Kotiteollisuus.

Did you ever released something of your other projects or are (and maybe will be) buried under the dust of time?

Well, yes. Currently I'm working on psychedelic folk/rock band called Belsebub & Perisynnit. The projects I make vary a lot in styles.

Furthermore, the music you play is strange, because it is rather limited in the 'breadth'. What makes this earthen dark doom metal so fascinating for you?

I listen to a lot of different kind of music styles. When it comes to creativity, I'm most creative when there is no actual goal. You'll get what you make.

Why do you avoid counterpoints, like an acoustic guitar, some keyboard motive, sample or even clean voice? Is your art an expression of the Finnish melancholy?

Wainas is meant to be brutal/dark metal. I have other projects where I use lighter tones, cleaner vocals etc. Nowadays I'm playing more with an acoustic guitar than electronic.

On the other hand, solos do play a role in your concept. So, why do you make use of this facet while avoiding a lot of others?

The melodic guitar-solos color nicely the heavy riffs that use in Wainas. I like to keep things simple.

Does your surrounding environment have an impact on your in terms of composing music?

I think yes. Dark autumn and cold winter helps making this kind of music and also the shit that may come in my mind after a few-day drinking spree.

Let us talk about your first demo. How does one have to understand its name and how long did it take you to get it done? Why are there no track titles, but actually Latin numbers?

Tuomio means the judgement. It took around 6 months of work in my home studio. I separated it into three parts since I think of it as a one entity and I didn't come up with better track titles.

As there is no indication to the content whatsoever, what does this demo deal with and as we are discussion this issue, what is the lyrical content of your compositions? Do you write rather metaphorical or use rhymes in certain limits or how do you deal with these aspects? Is there a difference between the albums?

The lyrics have been influenced by the Bible, Kalevala, demons, mythology and that kind of shit, mixed with the black humor. I guess I'm trying to make some kind of weird dark poetry. Most of the lyrics have been written in drunk or while suffering a hangover. Finnish brain seems to work best with these methods. I recommend a drink named Kilju to everyone. A source of inspiration, you can't get more creative hangovers that you get with kilju. The lyrics deal with pretty much the same themes in all Wainas releases.

Did you release it on CD as well, or only as a download on your homepage? Also your second demo appears in such a fashion, so it might be appropriate to ask you why the music seems to spread for free and not like on some physical medium like most of the band tend to do it?

Tuomio-EP has been released for free on Wainas website and it's also in split with S.o.M. & Hukkunud Hinged. I chose free sharing because I can spread my music around the world. I offered Tuhon maa-album to few small record companies, but then I thought that free sharing is easier for myself and the audience.

Your second output had been a split with S.o.M. & Hukkunud Hinged. How did this came to happen? Have you been contacted by the label? Are you generally open to split releases or has this been some sort of exception?

This split contains same tracks that are in Tuomio-EP. This one small record company contacted me and asked if they could publish those tracks in the split. Because I didn't have to do anything, I agreed. I have never had a physical version of this album.

'Tuhon Maa' your latest output comes a slightly more polished than your debut demo. How would you describe your music and do you feel that you have found your style? What possible reference are you able to give in order to make someone unfamiliar with the concept you explore clearer?

I don't go after any precise goals when doing Wainas. The music sounds like it sounds. I have tried to capture the soundscapes of rough hangovers.

My own style develops all the time.

Judging from the sound you use a drum-computer? Does this tool give you more artistic freedom, because you do not have to deal with another musician or is there a chance that it will be replaced at some point in the future?

Yes, Wainas is a one-man project and I'm not a very good drummer. Issue that also affects is my 36 m2 one-room apartment where i record everything. You just can't record any drums in there. I think that my neighbors have received their share of my music when I record vocals. :D

How do you deal with the song-writing? Is it a riff? What about tempo variations and dynamic patterns? Why do these play such a minor role?

Usually I develop some riffs in my head and then start to pile these riffs to computer in my studio.

Do you make music merely for yourself or is the feedback from fans and magazine important for you?

For myself. I don't give a shit about magazines or fans. They are all gays to me.

Seeing as your native tongue Finnish for your lyrics, it seems curious why you should not publish them? Why are your reasons for holding them back?

The lyrics are written on a paper and I haven't had time to write them to computer. But maybe one day.

Is there any chance that you might use English at some point in the future? What about a cover or even an interpretation of some 'well-known' track with the Wainas sound?

I'm even worse pronouncing English than writing. so I think I'll stick to Finnish. I have been thinking about some cover songs. Tuomari Nurmio's "Katuvaisten laulu" would make a very interesting sounding cover.

What about some new music? Is there release which might hit the shores soon?

Wainas is very quiet right now, but we have recorded some new songs for my band Belsebub & Perisynnit. You can listen all the released stuff in youtube and soundcloud.

Do you have releases available for sell right now?

I share my music for free.

How can people get in touch with you?

Wainas Facebook site for sure.

I usually answer to emails also.

Some closing comments of you like.

Keep it brutal

Game review

Katawa Shoujo

While preparing this edition in January, I stumbled over a simulation done by Four Leaves Studio with the name *Katawa Shoujo* by chance and gave it a try. The more I played it, the more I become interested in actually writing on it. Why? Well, to reduce the magazine to ramblings on the audio part of the art scene seems a bit too tiring in the long run, so it comes somewhat natural to broaden the entire approach of this magazine a bit. Furthermore, as the game was licensed under the Creative Commons, it is interesting to deal with something that uses the same way of distribution as this magazine of mine.

It might be best to approach this game with a certain analytical perspective. Therefore it seems to be best to not only discuss the characters, but also how the general concept had been executed as well as some perspective on what impressions it has left. It is important to stress the existence of spoilers, so anyone who has not played this game so far, will receive a good amount of information through this 'review' and this might backfire on how it can be enjoyed.

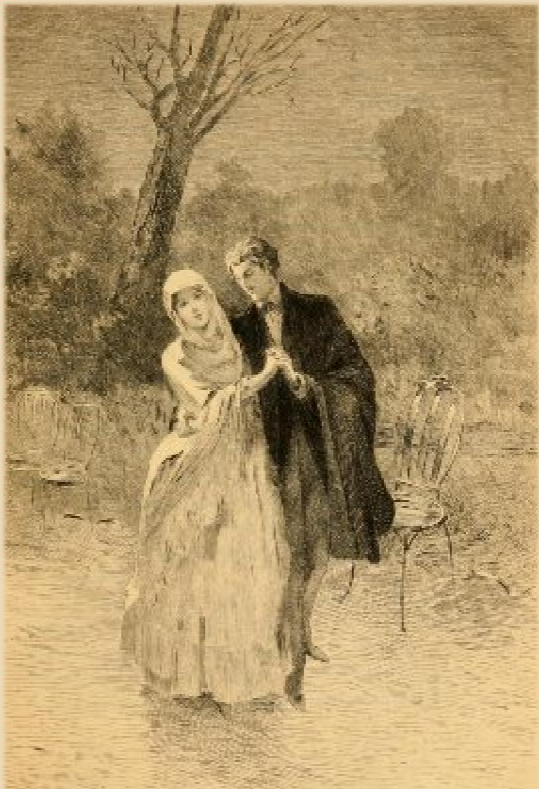
Should there be a game about disabled people?

One of the first aspects that needs to be addressed in a review on such a game is the general aspect whether there should be such a game at all and what requirement need to be fulfilled in order to justify it. How to avoid the pitfall in which someone with a disability is merely the focal point of some sort of joke or (humorous) social prejudice? The persons or rather characters need to be treated as people, whose life is affected by some struggle but without placing them in an environment in which it is exploited for one reason or another.

The developers of '*Katawa Shoujo*' took the 'easy' road and did not deal with person, who are suffering from sort mental disability. The school, as is explained at some point in an in-game discussion, is home to persons, who suffer from some sort of physical handicap; blindness, deafness, no limbs etc. It may be fair to state that the characters are generally rather normal who happen to deal with some lack of movement, sensory notion or whatever. How they are able to deal with this is explored through the various story lines in the game. Something tricky threat like cancer or some other serious injury that cannot be spotted from the outside have been avoided. Also extreme events, like seizures, asthmatic fits and the sort are brought up only once and only in one story line.

One aspect might raise an eyebrow though and this happens to be the first scene in the class (3-3). What is this guy – top right corner – doing? Is he sleeping, does he have some sort fit – look at the way he holds his hand. It is

not a position you would expect to see in case someone is taking a nap. It is not discussed in the description, nor does he appear at some point in the story.



Anyway, the students are generally among themselves and only in times of some kind of festival the outer world hits their protected, secluded one. It is then that in the monologues of Hisao the aspect of reaction of these two forces is brought up. References to the looks from people towards him or any other member of the school pops up, but these remain on the surface. Maybe this has to do with the location of the play; Japan. It may not be too far-fetched to reckon that a different country on this planet would have required another way of reaction between these worlds; especially when Emi bumps into Hisao. Everything remains on friendly and inoffensive levels. This would also be true of the relatives of the female characters; especially so for the father of Shizune Hakamichi. The belittling of the students seems to be rather due to his narcissistic nature than anything that has do with what the students are going through. An interesting person is the shopkeeper. His comment on Hanako's looks appear in a rather uplifting fashion and also towards Lilly he comes over quite positively. Insecure, but positive. Thinking of it, the conflict between the school and the outer world is a topic that is hardly brought up and creates never some kind of crisis. The system can therefore be described as an utopian, as the idealized concept emphasizes the secluded harmony over reality.

What about inner school conflicts that deal with the aspect of disabilities? There are clashes of course: Emi's run into Hisao in the first chapter, Shizune's limited inability to do a conversation without Misha etc. Yet these appear without any stress that would affect one person or another. They recognize the other persons and what these have to deal with, but from the conversations as well as the descriptions it never reaches the point in which someone would be hurt ... with one exception: the Lilly and Shizune issue. As is later revealed in the story these two are cousins and this comes with some troubles, which would include their fathers/families as well. The underlying aspect is a family feud but nothing that would undermine the positive message of the rose-coloured story.

To summarize a bit, the stress or the conflicts in the school do not differentiate very much from what is going on in a normal environment. The students are in groups and clubs, socialize with each other and behave like people tend to behave at this stage in their life.

Aside from had been discussed above is the general aspect whether there should be such a game at all? What could be gained from it? Well, someone with a disability is excluded – in limits depending on the severity of it – from society. Some are partially blind, some are deaf, some need constant help. The emphasis in the game is on those who are able to get along pretty well. A bit hurt, but not on such a degree as to open the floodgates for social prejudices.

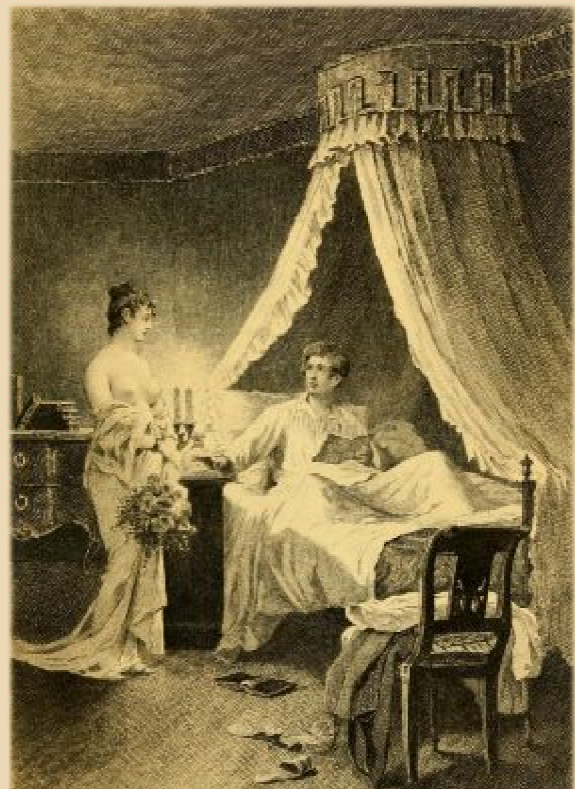
And this comes with problems.

The surreal nature of the game makes it difficult to take the step from the artificial to the real one. The harmonious way in which everything flows, the kind way in which everyone treats each other, the general reduction of the female characters to sexual objects for Hisao, take the idea into a wrong direction. Is this how we should see a blind person? As someone who waits to get laid? The exploitative nature of the game cannot be spirited and discussed away. Once a relationship is created, it all ends. When this game lacks one major aspect, then it is some kind of perspective. With the exception of the Shizune plot, all other end once the beloved person has been 'conquered'. How to deal with such a person and all their troubles, not to mention their insecurities, is a topic that is avoided like plague. It is in the details that the game fails to deliver. For instance, how does Rin take a shower? Or, how does Lilly deal with clothing – washing, ironing and putting them on? Sentences that would carry similar contents appear rather like an alibi than anything honest or serious. It might be fair to say that the political correctness is so overbearing that it becomes nauseous.

It is not possible to be empathetic with the disabled persons, because they never ever give you the means to do so. Exchange these 'affected ones' with 'normal ones' and you get some generic dating simulation. Yes, it is that bad. As honourable as the intentions might have been, the actual results leave a lot of aspects open. Where is the depth? Where are the conflicts? Merely scratches on the surface. You cannot be moved, because there is never a crisis that would actually grab you and stir your heart. There is hardly ever a moment that catches the player off guard and makes this person consider what has just happened or how this would lead to a reflection on how a similar situation in a real world could be handled.

Furthermore, the game does only one thing: throw the player into a situation in which dating is mandatory. In case someone attempts to avoid it, then the end it all ends; some plots sooner other later. The emphasis is on the aspect of getting a person laid and not a neutral perspective on the student life's in this school. The only way to escape it is death. Literally! What kind of message does this deliver? Why does one have to take the Kenji plot? Actually, why does one have to deal with Kenji in a nice way at all? It is easy to imagine some additional and more distant plot lines, which limit the pace a bit, but enables the player to dig deeper in the underlying idea of the concept. Through this, everything receives a wider recognition and the perspective would result in a better appreciation of the overall idea as well as the characters.

Once you have completed the game, what do you take from it with you? Is it possible for you to feel more empathetic towards a blind person? Are you able to understand someone better who has severe burns all over the body? Will you give a hand to those, whose had been cut off or had never ever the chance to develop? Ask yourself.



Characters:

Hisao

This is you ... and you are thrown into the whole situation with not much of an explanation. The longer the story goes, the more you find out about you. It requires a lot of reading, but this seems to be the point of such a game anyway. Narration would have been nice at some point, but might have slowed down the replay issue of the game ... something you have to do ... In order to prepare the listener for the things that might come or order to create a pause between the segments, it would have been nice to see the longer thought passages – not those that happen to pop-up in between of the dialogues – narrated. It would have supported the atmosphere neatly.

When it comes to the strengths of Hisao, the aspect of science needs to be emphasized specifically. In the Emi story line, it is even granted with a short side plot, even though its only purpose is to prepare the player for the 'final' resolve of the mystery, which surrounds this girl. Anyway, an additional aspect that tends to come up again and again is his fancy for reading.

Generally speaking, he is a normal type of person, whose intellectual abilities are there but seem to be unable to give him the means to understand his surrounding world in a somewhat convincing kind of way. In some respect he likes to be independent, yet confronted with a new situation seems to unwilling – or unable – to adapt to it properly. This becomes especially striking once he has to deal with Misha and Shizune. In this plot he simply trots on without giving much consideration what he is actually doing or what the consequences are. Also in terms of the other plots he gives rather the impression of a person, who, despite all his experience that he has had through his upbringing, fails in actually adapting to new situations accordingly.

An aspect that seems to be lacking in all story lines, is the general aspect of curiosity. In the story line with Rin the aspect is brought up how he liked to walk around at night in the town, but seems to have abandoned this once he has left the hospital. Furthermore, despite the large amount of clubs in the school, the total number that he actually manages to take part in as, all plot lines combined, one plus the student counsel.

Emi Ibarazaki

She had been the character whose story I had completed first. It flows somehow naturally, and enjoying running now and then as well, her character created some interest. When it comes to describing her, then the words shallow, narrow-minded, determined and energetic come to the mind. Due to her 'past' she follows a somewhat Thoreau'ean paradigm, which becomes quite apparent the more the story evolves. Emi is a kind of person, a lot of man would like to have around. She might have her own opinion, but as she is limited in her abilities to get it across or to present it in a mentally abstract kind of fashion, there are never any real chances of intellectual theorizing or playing games.



The plot is narrow but has some references to the one to Rin. Would she not have this kind of physical disability, it could also have taken place in a normal school. In fact, how everything plays out is closely oriented on the way teenagers mature and how they behave. The 'crisis' aspect at the beginning pushes the story, while the one at the end is more of a finale without any 'bite'.

In some way she has to fulfil the cliché that 'sport stars' are not the brightest people and are therefore limited in their mental capabilities.

Rin Tezuka

From all characters in the game, she might be the most extreme one. This has not so much to do with the disability – she has no arms – but due to the way her mind tends to wander off, the reader might find it difficult to appreciate her characterization as well as the general concept of how she expresses herself. It also she that possess a surprising amount of depth and even humour; if you are able to deal with her odd way of thinking that is.

Her plot is the most interesting one. Art generally helps to expose or to translate 'hidden fires' or subliminal elements of a characters or of time. Through the depiction of Hisao on a screen, the player, for the first and only time, is actually able to look a bit beyond the outer shade of this character.

In none of the other plots a revelation of equal proportions takes place. Furthermore, another contrast is the overall atmosphere, which tends to be darker, slightly melancholy and never really cheerful. It seems that the thoughtfulness of Rin's character spills over to the plot and drags it down in certain limits. Also her weird kind of humour adds a nice nuance to the story as a whole. A lot of metaphors appear throughout her story line and it is a daunting task to really decipher these.

Because Hisao has to get in touch with her, he is dragged down into a world of which he has no definite idea. When the aspect of art and its meaning is discussed, the following poem (only a part of it) by William Blake is presented to the player:

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

(first paragraph of *Auguries of Innocence* by William Blake)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguries_of_Innocence

This metaphorical way of seeing things, this depth of these few lines is something that the entire script of the game rarely touches upon. As mentioned above, the issues regarding her interaction with the world – inside and outside the school – is hardly brought up; the issue at the festival would be one rare example. How does she get stuff from a to b; what about her ability to clean herself; and to get food (during her painting session).



Shiina “Misha” Mikado

She would be one of the first characters the player is introduced to. With her strange hair – colour, style – she is rather off-putting and gives the impression of a person who had been bathed too much and too hot at that. There is something infantile or stupendous about her and the way the story takes a sharp turn in the Shizune plot, comes simply as unconvincing as well as artificial. For some deeper reason she is deeply attached to her and hangs out with her as much as she can. Both are members of the student council and they try to drag Hisao into this obscure organization, too.

An open question throughout the entire game seems to be the aspect what her disability would be. It is never mentioned somewhere and she gives no indication of an open physical disability. In some kind of discussion the aspect of the students in this school is brought up and that also normal ones are allowed to enter it. Maybe she is such a person after all. Along with Yuuko she has no plot of her own. This might also be the reason her character is not explored in any meaningful detail.

Shizune Hakamichi

She is deaf and mute and generally relies on Misha for talking to other students. Being of a rather dominant type of person, it is not surprising to see her as the class representative and the president of the student council. It is something she had always wanted to be since her youth and she approaches every work with a certain kind of merciless vigour. In the game it is only her perspective on the tasks of the student council that is generally been presented and not the one of other students; with some small exceptions of course. Reflection and, as a result of this, evolution of her work is not been presented.

Her persona is presented as intelligent on the one side, but with defects in terms of relying on other persons on the other. The work that needs to be done is generally limited to the few people she is in touch with, even though it would take longer for her to do so. In some respect she represents a leader, who is too convinced of his own abilities, while lacking the foresight as well as the ability to actually lead someone. Elite for the sake of being elite, becomes an exclusion all too soon.

She likes to challenge other people and is in some ways fanatical about it. Sadly, she seems to be unaware what a game can actually be. Generally, only her perspective is presented: a duel. The idea that it can also represent some kind of way to socialize with other persons never strikes her mind and is never ever brought up in the discussions. Both her and Misha are alienated from the rest of the students and once Hisao joins their ranks, he is struck by the same fate. The whole plot deals with how Shizune receives some blows to her narcissistic perception, through which some kind of 'learning curve' or shift in perception is created. A clear opposition to her behaviour is something that never really exists. Everyone seems to be in with this 'challenge' thing ...

Her plot is the most tiring one ... because it drags on endlessly. She has no real personality, she is rather some kind of machine that has become flesh. How she changes and also how the bad ending is portrayed, leaves the player a bit confused; to say the least.

Hanako Ikezawa

It may be a bit of speculation, but a lot of players might be magically drawn towards her character. She is off-putting, mysterious and hard to deal with. Her persona is explored quite early in the game, but the dialogues are generally kept to a minimum; something that has to do with her disability, or to be more precise, with her mental state of mind. Most of the time she is around Lilly and only in a later stage of the game the player is actually able to spend some time with her alone.



Her disability is a result from a fire which not only killed her parents but has left her with a large amount of scars; something that she tries to cover in various kinds of ways. Being therefore rather drawn back from the other students, she relies on reading and enjoying drinking tea with Lilly in school as well as in the tea house.

While on the one hand the player might be drawn towards her in one way or another, the way her person evolves leaves a lot of open questions. Firstly, even though she reads a lot, she does not seem to make use of it. In the discussions her part does never appear as intellectual in any way, like one would suspect her to be after all this digging in of books. That she uses books for the solving of problems can be seen through the way she approaches the 'chess issue'. While Rin perceives the world in a mystical and coded manner, something natural due to her artistic nature, the same should (?) actually be expected from her and that she might see the world in a coded way as well. The reasons for this would not only be psychological – to find an answer to her predicament and a meaningful way to deal with it – but also to give her a chance to find a place in her environment. Yes, she is very shy; yes, she is very introverted, but this does not limit her ability to form a strange kind of perception of the world. What has remained untouched are the pathological implication of her predicament as well as her psychological stress. Generally, the dialogues remain vague,

scratch the surface and leave the persona of Hanako unknown; towards the end you know only a little more than in the beginning.

On a side note, the sex scene is maybe the most arbitrary thing in the entire game. Instead of developing some beautiful dialogue in the scene preceding it, the writers relied on some 'award' for the player, like it all too common in a computer game. I waited for the achievement note to pop up.

One way to solve the problems with her character would have been through the use of poetry, which she might pass over to Hisao now and then in order to overcome the general issue of shyness and introversion. Also to give him an idea on how her inner self. Then a plot similar to Rin would have been possible. Sadly, such a thing had never been considered. The 'hidden fires' remain unlit and therefore unnoticed.

Lilly Satou

Of all other girls she is the one which does not seem to fit into the game at all. Her disability would be blindness, but she manages to get along pretty well; either through the help of her sister or her friend Hanako. While Emi is referred to as the heart of every group she is in – according to Lilly – her role would be that of a gentle and ever caring mother. This includes Hisao as well, once she recognizes how his heart affects his daily life and tends to drain the energy out of him. Yet while she is caring, she generally lacks foresight, due to her inability to provide the characters with an advice to progress in such a way as to deal with their situation in a better kind of way. Hanako is locked in her shyness, while Hisao also receives no encouragement from her side to take care of himself and to improve his heart condition. She may give these persons a bad feeling about remaining deadlocked, but the 'trouble' ends at this point and does not venture on to a better state.

Aside from this aspect the story is also the one that leaves the player confused at best. Especially the situation in the summer house – and continuing from there on – is anything but convincing. To go into details here would spoil a lot of the story, so this is left to a potential player of the game. Keep the paragraph above in mind ... then you will see the problem with this scenario. The end of her part is also pathetically melodramatic ... and artificial.

Kenji

He would be the only other male student Hisao is in contact with. Being his neighbour he is in contact with him quite often actually, but it is his character, or to be more precise his 'faults', that makes Hisao turn off again and again. See, being rather isolated and uncertain around women, not to mention lacking knowledge about the effects of intense sexual intercourse, his earlier affection towards the other gender has turned into something that can be amply described as misogynistic. He is also rather short of sight, is a furious advocate of conspiracy theories – generally involving women – and has to deal with lactose intolerance but rather reluctant to deal with this issue.

He pops up now and then, but has little impact on the story. His rambling are generally rather furious and confusing and tiring and monotone ... which are a bit of a strain to read and to enjoy. A psychosis is fun once, maybe twice but once it becomes stressed over excess it loses its fascination all too soon.

Yuuko

Similar to the teacher Muoto she is some sort of support character. Working two jobs, in the school library as well in the tea house 'Shanghai', she is closely linked to all the plots. Being generally tired, or to be more precise overworked, her discussions are often a bit chaotic but with glimpses of wisdom, like you would expect it from an adult person. Her behaviour does not reflect such at times.

She has a plot of her own in the Emi story line, but it is never brought to a convincing end.

Favourite scenes:

The end with Hanako, especially the last picture. It is a really rewarding picture towards the end. She moves towards him in order to kiss him, out of her own impulse that is. On the other hand it is disappointing to see it end there, because a lot of aspects remain untouched and unexplored.

First running scenes with Emi

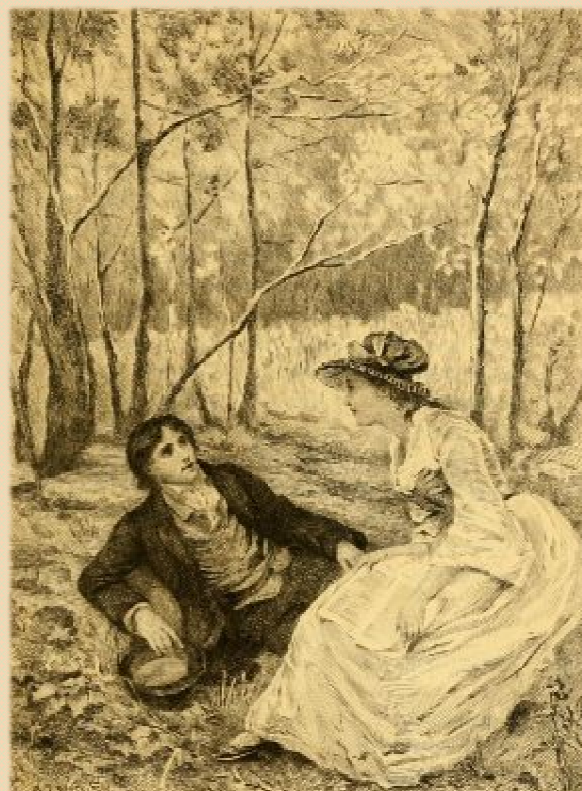
The text has some charm and is quite funny; especially when you have had some experience with running and feel somewhat sympathetic with Hisao.

Rin's ramblings

As written above, she is quite off putting and her strange way of seeing things bewilders to a certain degree. The dry humour of the dialogues are a welcome counterpoint to the general melancholic atmosphere of the game.

General perception

Having approached this game with a rather blank mindset and having hardly ever played such a game before, my point of view might differ considerably from those who have a larger amount of experience on this issue. Nevertheless, there might be less bias on my side.



The stories are linear, so in case you have hooked up with a girl – yes, there is one early way out of it ... – then there is either the choice of a good or neutral or a 'bad' ending; the latter from the perspective of Hisao. You cannot switch again after the second chapter... what is gone, remains so and also the amount of characters that you tend to interact with declines considerably once the festival has passed. Somehow this is curious, because after you have become used to it all and acclimated yourself, the entire complexity of the game is shattered and leaves you with the remaining fragments. Furthermore, and this is a really tiring aspect, each of the characters progresses in the same kind of way: introduction – building up – consternation or crisis – end. Every freaking time ... Moreover, and this might confuse considerably, the time line of the female characters are inconsistent:

Emi, Lilly, Hanako, Rin: around the summer.

Shizune: Graduation. (which means an entirely additional trimester)

Every time the stories are dealing with how everyone is unable to make out what they want to do in the future and then the game leaves you with 80% of all the stories half finished. Really? There are so many aspects that could have been discussed: the parents of Hanako, the future profession of Emi, the family stuff of Lilly, Rin's art and how she sees the world ... Putting this aside, it immediately opens up another can: with the end of Shizune a sequel is possible, because the stage is basically set and clear. Each of them has a perspective and you feel that the issues had been resolved, while in all other cases you left alone and in the middle of it all.

What had turned me off in some respect are the somewhat tiring erotic parts; not that I would mind them, but at the point you have reached the last person you have to complete, they become predictable not to mention artificial. Like a thing that had been added in order to attract a broader audience and to improve the acceptance of such a game to the male audience. Especially the depiction of Hanako raises the question whether the details want to compensate the player for what he has had to go through in order to reach this stage. And to bring up another aspect: why is she shaved? Such would not fit to her personality and also the story received an odd caricaturization, especially when the 'good' ending is considered. It does not feel necessary to move into this direction ... or? Lilly would be another topic. Do not expect everything to be logically thought through.

Linearity between the different kinds of stories

An aspect that strikes the play is the absence of comparative linearity in the sense of events that appear and that help to keep the story going. There is the letter from Iwanako, which differs in terms of the delivery considerably between the stories. In the 'Shizune' one it appears extremely late, while all other receive it before the summer vacation. Also Muoto's discussion about why the students are in this school varies in the time it shows up. Yet, all these appear in a somewhat random fashion. The other festival is only mentioned in the Shizune plot, and there is an inconsistency in terms of Lilly leaving or not, which depends on the plot that is being taken. It would have been nice to see some fixations in the various story lines. It feels like the relationships had been pressed into the four chapters and everything else does not matter: with the exception of Shizune.

Open or loose ends ...

(contains heavy spoilers)

Where to start? The aspect of the book thief is never brought to a close. Also this feud between Shizune and Lilly remains unsolved and rather unexplored. Misha's character is presented in a kind that leaves a lot of questions open; like her disability for instance, or why she did not fight against Hisao in order to establish a relationship with Shizune. Hanako's history, especially the aspect of her parents – brought up several times – in unclear and never dealt with. Also Rin's fancy for strange music and such remains unexplored.

These are the obvious ones and they reveal themselves without digging too deep into the person's psyche and revealing their intentions of behaving like they do/did. From the writing of the story line as well as from the discussions in the game, you can see that those in charge of this aspect seemed to have not been totally aware of this aspect. The reason why this the case has to do with the main character: Hisao. He had a death experience and such can be pretty traumatic and if it affects your everyday existence, the chances are that you are deeply troubled by the state of the body, the psychological effects as well as the likeliness to participate in a normal society.

The plot is as follows. All of a sudden he finds himself in a new school surrounded by new person and limited in his abilities; he has to start a new life, but the text does never dig so deep as to create a convincing impression of this questioning of what he is able to do. Take the moment in which he is hurt by Emi in the hall. Would this not evoke the memories of his proximity to death? Would this not naturally lead to an outburst of anger and even panic? It is not portrait in a convincing manner. Instead, her eyes lure him away from the ever immanent proximity of mortality and he gulps his anger.

Then there are his parents ... or to be more precise, the absence of them. It is always about the girls and never really about him. Fragments of this shortcomings appear throughout the various plots, but rather in a random kind of fashion. There is never some deeply introspective view of it all; everything is done for some reason – especially so in the Shizune one – but the player is hardly able to feel sympathetic with him or what is being done, left alone able to create such an amount of interaction with the 'world' that it would actually matter. You are with the girls most of the time and never with any boys. There is no 'buddy' on which the player can rely, from which a different kind of view can be gained and who might help Hisao to get accustomed.

What remains further unexplored and is never touched, is the reason Hisao does something. He just happens to do it and everyone seems to be comfortable with it. His intentions are never really questioned. Why does he want to help Emi or Hanako? The former tends to ask, whether he can really help her, but the aspect what enables him to fulfil this role remains untouched. It is nauseating how the positivism flows through the game. According to Lilly, he has a good heart – metaphorically speaking –, but his underlying intentions, the psychological implications of his actions, are never brought up. In terms of Shizune and Rin this aspect, because each of their characters does not really need help in an ordinary kind of way, fails to receive any attention at all. Due to the limitation in the interaction it is hard to move the game in a certain direction and to explore these aspects in one way or another.

Operation systems:

Windows, MacOS and Linux

Should you play this game?

It is a charming game nonetheless, despite all the flaws that it has. You can feel that some effort had been put into it, but the work seems to have been rather random without a real 'master plan', which would have helped the writers to get their job done in a better and more sound way. Linearity as well as the shallowness of the concept are troubling issues and they take something away from the atmosphere as well as the chances that the player feels immersed in this world. Good for a fix now and then, but hardly of a kind that would break open new horizons and present a view into a world that is all too often neglected by modern (mass)media.

In terms of a score:

5,5/10

Official sites:

<http://katawa-shoujo.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katawa_Shoujo

Music reviews

Aspec(t) – Skinless

(Italy; Noise, Experimental)

4 Tracks (3" CDr – Dokuro) - _ _ - (23:36)

[http://www.toxorecords.com/aspec\(t\)/](http://www.toxorecords.com/aspec(t)/), <http://dokuro.it/>

Not too long ago I wrote about the release 'Humans Fuck Off' and how I interpreted their rather offending as well as the definite proposition of a name... or shall I merely see it as a desperate kind of insult? From the same label, intriguing isn't it?, a release with the outré name 'skinless' has hit the surface some time ago. It might be best to take the name literally... again. Especially once the music and the style is added into the consideration.

Ignore all the messy aspects of gravity for a moment. In case the outer tissue of flesh is removed and all of the organs remain at their place, then in front of the viewer a curious and inexplicable chaos would reveal itself. The moving of fluids, the secret passages through with the food is transported and the ever constant pumping of the heart are no longer hidden, but exposed in all its stupidity. Now imagine you would add sound to it all. A certain noise for a certain action, a certain progression or a certain transformation. You eat a something, your body reacts. A reach for breathe and there is a response. Considering the multitude of events per time, it would not be too far-fetched to describe the outcome as rather chaotic and messy ... just like the music of Aspec(t).



There is a problem with the metaphor discussed above. Nature or the human body is much more controlled and less jumpy in terms of new events. Oxygen is been dealt with on a constant basis, food is digested more or less all the time and also the heart has a rather controlled or predictable rhythm; speaking of normal and not life threatening conditions. A proper reference to actual style of the Italian artists would be an amorphous machine, whose parts constantly reshape themselves as well as redefine their purposes. Skinless seems to be a metaphor for a permanent evolution or even revolution of a system. It is not possible for a skin to develop, because the fluctuation of the elements and the energies are of such a kind as to progress in ever wilder and ever more chaotic realms. Nothing is predictable, nothing remains static.

Placing this in terms of the music should make a lot of things easier to understand, or? Aspec(t) make one thing clear from the beginning: they do not seem to care much about the listener. It is rather art for arts sake; a ferocity which longs for some release or expression; an expression which is hard to bear due to its harsh kind of nature.

Mario Gabola on saxophone, SEC_ with some electronic equipment and Maurizio Argenziano on guitar, this would be the line-up. In terms of the impact or to create some kind of unsettling sound, the former instruments seems to take the cake here. It is the energy, the extreme kind of dissonance, which might turn the listener off. When you see sax-player on stage you can get an experience to what levels this piece of metal can be brought to, yet compared with the Italians this would only seem to be some kind of minimal bottom line; some shallow common ground that is touched rarely ... if ever.

It does not even take the band one second, one single second, to make this clear. They set the pace, the stage and whatnot from the very beginning. To preparation, no build-up, no slow introduction. Chaos is there because it is there, it does not venture by at some point in history and bids farewell at another, while the ever-charming as well obnoxiously disgusting order seeks to replace it.

'White Phosphorus', the opener, is a hectic piece of music, while the succeeding 'Mark 77' is some calm industrial/noise piece of art. Paranoia Fleece is more chaotic again, as is the last track on the album 'Cigarettes'.

Aspec(t) is fascinating and disturbing at the same time. Their release is a combination of extremes. Calm moments are harshly intercepted by noise elements and the listener has to confront music that is anything but easy to grasp and to enjoy. A turbulent, occasionally annoying setting is unleashed upon everyone who gives this CD a spin. It is not for moments of relaxation, but rather for those in which the mind of a connoisseur longs for some new fix, the latest mess.

Note:

Comes as a 3" CDr with a slightly startling cover.

Lost Resolve – EP Demo 2011

(Canada; Post-Black Metal)

3 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) -_-_- (23:15)

<http://www.facebook.com/LostResolve>

Band number three. Lost Resolve would be the third project of the Canadian musician Mark R. Furthermore, with it he moves in a slightly different direction, even though there are some similarities towards his first band 'Ov Hollowness'. Aside from the general setting and instrumentation of course.

What are these, then?

First of all, the genre description had been taken from the Metal Archives site and not been 'invented' by me. Personally, it would have been nice to present elements that would be the 'post'-characteristic of the music in a better way. There are not many counterpoints to the black metal, like they can be found in the art of Lantlos for instance. Yes, Wasted Worlds has some sort of doomy passages in it, but 'Lose Resolve' fails to take the listener into a different conceptual realm. The opener is even more conservative at it.

When it comes to the differences, then the performance of the Canadian bands consists of a good amount of tremolo-picking in the guitars, slowly evolving melody lines, a rather high pace with rare interruptions and some rare vocals – the last track would be an instrumental. Due to the narrow concept it is even possible to ignore the programming of the drum-computer for a while, because the it is not able to mess things up. Despite the general limitation of the approach it is possible to enjoy the music, simply because nothing shines out or disturbs the performance. Furthermore, no samples appear, no noise effects and also ambient passages cannot be found. A simple setting and nothing more.

It is a charming first release but nothing more. Lost Resolve should broaden their approach and add further facets to their idea of playing post-black metal.

Conte Slayvimore – Il Freddo Respiro della Morte (2011)

(Black Metal; Italy)

7 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (32:25)

<http://www.myspace.com/conteslayvimor>

Conte Slayvimore is not new to this magazine. A short glance over the previous editions reveal that all their previous releases had been discussed at some point. It might be necessary to make one aspect clear from the beginning: the band has continued on their path and did not wander away from it. What had been written on the album preceding 'Il Freddo Respiro della Morte' can be brought up in terms of the new one as well.

As a one-man-black-metal band some obvious shortcomings appear or have to be dealt with. One would be the instrumentation. There is a drum-computer for instance and also the vocals are done by the sole person behind this project. While the former might be perceived as the (low) standard of modern day black metal art, with no escape out of this 'level of performance' any time soon, the handling of the mic is a different issue. There are a lot of bands, which are able to deal with this aspect in a proper kind of way; sadly, this Italian one would not be one of them. Again, the sound of the screams or croaking or what kind of term you want to use for them, fails to add something positive to the arrangements. Their lack of power and venom adds a strange touch to the dark atmosphere of the music. It is a counterpoint and by no means one that would support the intentions of the band.

Would the compositions be – for arguments' sake – instrumental, then one would have to acknowledge that they are actually quite listenable and can be described as solid. In terms of the style, references to the depressive black metal subgenre are present. The reverb in the sound of the play of the guitar, the occasional minimalism in the arrangements, the atmosphere, which drifts all too often in a realm where melancholy and sadness are rather dominant, and also the particular way in which the lyrics are expressed point towards this direction. Nevertheless, the Italian band does not limit their concept to this one facet: bursts with blast beats create a welcome counterpoint and a source of aggressive facets. When it comes to the amount in which each of these elements appear, then the former clearly dominates the latter. It is somewhat intriguing to see bands rely on one melody line and creating something listenable out of it.

Conte Slayvimore play underground black metal, which has its charm as well as its flaws. Nothing new, nothing outstanding, but well done in its own merits. The band has taken another small step forward with this latest output. It is good enough for a spin now and then.



It Only Gets Worse – EP (2012)

(Netherlands; Electronics, Spoken Words)

3 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (15:20)

<http://itonlygetsworse.bandcamp.com/>

Some might know 'Maurice de Jong' through the variety of projects that he is in. 'Gnaw Their Tongues' in particular has had some interesting releases, even though the latest outputs seem to indicate that the amount of releases per year takes a toll on the quality. IOGW is a new projects and takes the listener into a different direction: the music are electronics, which remind on some respect on Ulver's Metamorphosis recording: electronic beats, some soundscape layers, noise effects ... it all creates a dense atmosphere, which has some amount of dynamics and tension.

Yet this by no means everything. Spoken passages done by Matt Finney (of 'Heinali and Matt Finney' fame) – with a normal voice and no manipulation – work as a counterpoint to the artificial style of the music and adds a strange touch to the performance. The topics vary and as these parts are generally rather short, it is hard to feel moved by them or to place them into the deeper context of the art. Furthermore, the way these appear is rather conventional and some slight manipulation would have had a positive effect on how everything is perceived. The balancing as well as a balancing of the elements need to be mentioned as well ...

It is a nice idea ... and listenable as well. The Infant T(h)ree, reviews in an earlier edition of this magazine, offer a more convincing approach in terms of spoken passages and experimental music.

Kheta Hotem – Meri Vaahtolaine

(Finland; Folk)

1 Track (CDr – Jozik Records) - _ _ _ (35:27)

<http://jozikrecords.blogspot.com/>, <http://www.saunalahti.fi/hjp/>

The label advertises it in following fashion:

[...] a shamanistic show of komutian music experience!

(Source: <http://jozikrecords.blogspot.com/>)

99.99% might ask at this point, what 'komutian music' is all about and they would rightfully do so, because it is something that appears rarely on the radar of the music scene. Luckily, the band has a homepage and seems to be aware of this issue, as they explain it some detail:

<http://www.saunalahti.fi/hjp/>

Did you read it? No, then do it ... and do not even dare to return until you have completed these awfully designed three paragraphs; no, there will be no compensation from my side in terms of possible eye cancer.

To give you some idea of the musical breadth you might experience at a live concert and in certain limits also on this recording, a short glimpse on the instrumentation will be quite fruitful: didgeridoo, snake flute, violin, balian frog [güiro], accordion and a variety stringed instruments as well as percussions, not to mention noise elements etc. From this list alone you can imagine how rich the whole sound has to be.

What had been written in the previous edition of the magazine is equally true here: to do such a long composition justice is a tricky thing indeed. Even though the music has some jazzy and rhythmic passages, the major part of the performance has a rather monotonous hypnotic touch. At times it is wild and chaotic, then it moves to a rather calm and predictable pattern. The music heads for unity, only to move into a different direction soon after. An interesting aspect are the vocals. On the one hand a clean speaking voice appears, while some deep growling sound create a star contrast to them.

Unpolished hypnotic folk music, such is the art on this release. In style it is of a kind that rarely reaches for a broader audience. Those contrasting and aligning melodies are a challenge to listen to. It has something of Jazz in it, something of improvisation but always wrapped in a kind of sound that is never really cheerful. Sadness or rather melancholy hangs over everything and even though it changes in intensity, it never vanishes entirely. It can be doubted that the performance and the intensity can be grasped by listening to the CD. Not only the bass is a bit too thin, the whole spectrum gives the impression of being slightly distant. Nevertheless, it is an interesting and at times even haunting piece of art.

Note:

the CD comes with a crochet insert and a photo. Limited to 75 copies.

Glina – Spiritual Safety

(Russia; Ambient, Rock, Drone, Noise)

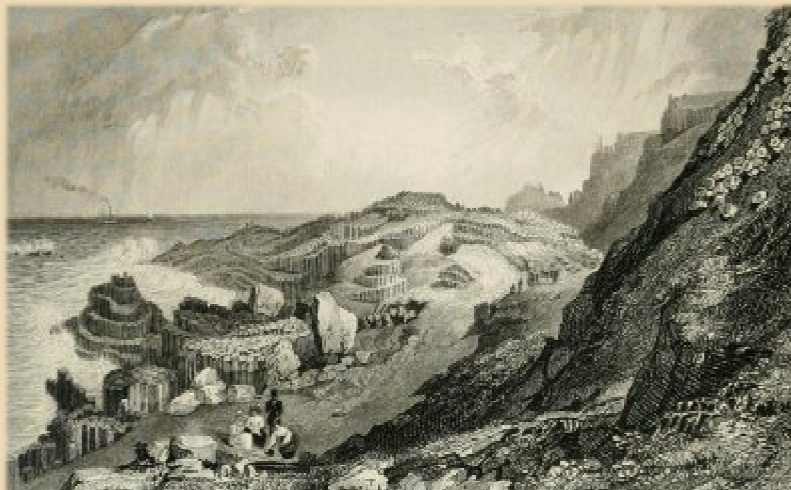
6 Tracks (Tape – Jozik Records) -_-_- (~ 45 minutes)

<http://jozikrecords.blogspot.com/>, <http://glina.bandcamp.com/>

Language is a tricky thing on so many levels. Just imagine, you sit still and attempt to enjoy some piece of audio art, when all of a sudden some intruding sample disturbs the peaceful atmosphere and put all of your senses on the alert. Was this phrase in your native tongue? You listen again but now more closely. It might be to challenging to penetrate the layers of soundscapes and noise. It leaves you unsatisfied, maybe somewhat annoyed, but also fascinated. Glina ... used German phrases: Keine Zeit (no time), zu spät (too late) ... along with various examples of grammatically wrong German (ein große Versteht). It bewilders, it disturbs and it amuses. The play with these words appears in several compositions in varying style and impact. In the metal scene a certain kind of unintentional misuse of English tends to appear in the underground – generally described as 'Engrish' – can be found as well. This Russian band on the other hand seems to be more aware of what they are doing; at least this is the impression that you get now and then.

Not only the music is deharmonized, also the language itself becomes deformed and changed. The grammar and the syntax are ripped apart, while strange new vibes and noises give the impression of chaos and randomness. Samples are often used in such a way as to add a certain meaning to an otherwise "instrumental" composition. These can vary in style and concept, through which the creator is able to move the music in certain direction and add nuances, which would otherwise be impossible to be dealt with. All of a sudden something becomes a parody, a caricature, a homage.

Glina seem to head for another direction, though. On the cover artwork some kind of insect is shown, but in a very



peculiar kind of way: one side can be examined in detail, while the other is blurred through the use of water colour. These two sides are somewhat representative for the approach that this band from St. Petersburg used. While the music, or to be more precise the instruments, create some kind of red line, provide the listener with an orientation, the texts are confusing, misleading and in case the listener is able to grasp some of their meaning even disturbing; someone familiar with a language will always cringe at flaws in grammar and vocabulary – I hope the native speaker of the lingua franca are still able read this humble attempt of a magazine without raising their eyebrows

too much.

Anyway, Glina is, among a large variety of other meanings, also a Slavic word for clay and as you can create numerous forms out of this earthen material, also this Russian band plays with a lot of elements and styles and combines them in a peculiar kind of way. The label describes them as a 'jam band' and such gives a good indication of where the music takes the listener. Melody and song structures are an important element, but it is hard to compare them with the concept that can be described as the state of the art. Rather like post-rock or in vein of more experimental genres are the six tracks on this tape. Elements of drone and ambient play a vital role here, as the progression of the music is rather slow and steady with hardly any drastic switches in terms of the tempo and such.

Guitars, saxophon, percussions of various types, electronics and such were the instruments with which the band crafted this release. At times the music is calm with only the drums and some vague melodies, while at others it has switched to some intense noisy rock thing – Ne V Schet –, but these are quite an exception indeed. The arrangements are generally calm, but tend to consist of various types of layers and it is often up to the percussions to set the pace; their play in the background tends to dominant in some respect and adds a slightly ritualistic touch to the entire performance. What makes this tape interesting are two aspects:

1. The progression of the music towards the tracks with the vocals. The first compositions do not have them and once they appear, there is a certain shift in the entire concept. Everything is denser and the female voice creates some sort of focal point; a clear contrast to the shiftiness of the rest of the music.
2. The noises, the layers and the atmosphere would be the second one. There is something haunting, occasionally melancholic but always progressing about it all. In the opener for instance, a drum motive sets the pace in the background, while guitars and a saxophone reach out for Lovecraftian madness at times. It is a nice contrast and grabs the attention of the listener over the entire length of the track. Generally speaking, Glina tend offer something new the longer a composition meanders on and is therefore able to maintain a certain level of atmosphere.

It is a neat little release, which had been able to spark my interest considerably over the last months. Curiously, it is still able to fascinate me and has not worn down in any kind of way. Like a pestering cockroach this tape might haunt you for quite an amount of time and you could find it challenging to get rid of it. So you continue to explore it, dive into it ... into a world of odd arrangements, contrasting layers and occasionally grammatically wrong German.

Note:

Limited to 50 copies. Can be downloaded for free from the bandcamp site.

Note 2:

The god of the Internet lead me to the following page, which will give you some background information on the design of this release:

<http://sashakretova.blogspot.com/2011/03/glina-spiritual-safety.html>

Stillheten – The Right and God Made Sun Did Rise (2011)

(Sweden; Folk, Ambient)

4 Tracks (Tape – Ominous Recordings) - _ _ - (34:37)

<http://stillheten.bandcamp.com/>, <http://www.ominousrecordings.com/>

Finally an analogue artefact with a download link. Really, it is a nuisance to buy them and having to go through the time-consuming ordeal of ripping them via Audacity. The same can be said of the vinyl stuff as well. What do labels and artists think when they spread their art in such a way? Time has become scarce these days and not everyone has several computers at hand with which the process of converting something from analogue to digital can be accomplished. As even the slightest kind of noise is recorded, it is impossible to browse the Internet, listen to music or to use some kind of Instant Messaging program, because there is the constant danger that the enduring task of getting the music in a more handy format is ruined through such a trifle.

As you might have guessed already, the review is based on the download files and not on the actual tape. Stillheten is, like many other bands in this edition, not particularly new to this magazine. The older editions contain several other reviews and even an interview. In order to get a good impression of the general style of the band, it might best to consult these and give the music a try. Most of the releases are available from the DNA Collective and in case you find the music of this Swedish band interesting, you might want to keep an eye on the aforementioned label, because they will spread another handmade edition of the band's next release.

'The Right and God Made Sun Did Rise', is the title of this latest output and it is of such a kind as to take the listener through the history of the band. Despite a charming as well as cheering opening, the melancholy gradually takes over and dominates the music after a few minutes into the third one. Elements from the dark ambient genre

take equally more space and help to support this dark atmosphere; like had been the case on the earlier outputs of Stillheten. Their part is reduced to something in the background and is generally very minimalist; drone-like to present some kind of reference.



Actually, the general idea behind this band has hardly anything to do with complex arrangements and melodies. Just a 12 string guitar and some sounds to support it. Pretty basic isn't it? Yet you do not feel that something would be missing. The concept is to lure the listener into some dark place in order to contemplate over life, nature or the like. In some respect the vague kind of melodies play with the listener. Also the track titles are a hint in this direction. Even though the reference might be a bit daring, Disney's Fantasia presents something in a similar fashion. When you look at how the animations were done and how the music comes into play, then you might want to sit back, listen to this work of Stillheten and try to imagine the scenery, attempt to create it on front of your eyes. Are the sounds, the arrangements or the motives merely a reflection of the vague story, outlined by the track titles, or does the change in the environment come into play here as well? It is tricky. The listener might find it challenging to 'get the idea behind it all'.

Therefore, how does this all play out? Compared with the earlier outputs of the band, this one lacks a bit their light-heartedness; Requiem for a Loving God. With a progression towards a more gloomy and minimalist concept, the band demands a more of attention of the listener. Compared with the acoustic releases of October Falls, the approach is more daring and free in the expression. In some respect the German band Empyrium comes to the mind, but only their Weiland release and only the instrumental tracks of it. The idea of expressing some aspect of nature through music, to express them in a different medium is a tricky thing indeed. Nevertheless, it is possible to do so.

When it comes to have a definite opinion on this release, then some difficulties arise. On the one hand it is nice to venture through this evolving kind of story, while on the other in the back of the head there is this constant nagging about some additional elements or facets. Be it a sample, but it some distinct noise effect or whatever some sound that would disrupt it all in some respect; creates a stop or a focal point. The Swedish band is all about creating an ambient atmosphere, while avoiding a clear melody line as well as a predictable pattern in terms of the chords. Fragments appear in some manner, they progress in one way or another, but the approach could be a bit more intense and daring.

In terms of the 'target audience', then all those who have a certain fancy for minimalist ambient folk, which is rather melancholic in style should give this release a try.

Note:

The tape is limited to 25 copies only. Comes in a handmade hand painted paper sleeve and with a download code.



Instant Pyrolysis – The Asylum (to be released: 2012 – 03)

(France; Dark Ambient)

11 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - - - (63:40)

<http://www.instant-pyrolysis.com/>

Again, and this might not be surprising, this release and how it came to receive a review here has some kind of story behind it. The 12th edition of this magazine had a review on a release by the band "Backyard Ghost", which happened to be released by Ambientaria Records; the label of the person behind Instant Pyrolysis. One thing has lead to another somehow.

Even though the band name might invoke a certain kind of imagery, such is actually a progression into the wrong direction, because the art offered on this latest output is rather calm and minimalist. Come to think of it, also the titles – Paranoid Schizophrenia for instance – promise more than they are actually able to deliver. In fact, the entire release drowns in a certain kind of predictability ... or rather shallowness. This needs some explanation.

One aspect that is quite striking deals with the general lack of disruptive elements. In fact, most of the music on the album passes by unnoticed. There are the typical dark ambient sound and textural elements, which are all well crafted, no doubt about that, but are appear not backed up by something else. Everything is in a nice flow and nothing works as a counterpoint or a contrasting element. In some respect it would be fair to state that the harmonious concept of Instant Pyrolysis becomes overbearing and might turn away the listener from this latest release of them. Despite some amount of variation in the textures and concepts, the band cannot shake the feeling off that something is actually missing.

Something that comes to the mind while preparing to write on this release had been the band 'Cities Last Broadcast', whose album had been reviewed in the 15th edition of this magazine. The art of the French band appears to be a strapped down version of it. Less in intensity, less in complexity, less in atmosphere. A braver attempt might have made the approach more interesting, but it feels like Instant Pyrolysis stopped at a too early point. What came as a surprise somehow would be the track 'Escape (feat. Hoyland)', because of a similarity with two other (well-known) projects: Vinterriket and Nebelkorona. The use of the keyboard and the distinct texture in the background are some kind of a reference to them.

Note:

The release comes in a digipack and is limited to 50 copies limited (signed + poster + online bonuses)

Diablery – The Eye

(Greece; Symphonic Black Metal)

4 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_- - (15:46)

<http://www.myspace.com/diableryofficial>, <http://www.facebook.com/DiableryOfficial>

Well, well, well, Diablery has a new release out. You might think so much but once you give the music a spin you realize that it is old wine in new skins. The tracks from their first output have all been “rerecorded, remixed, remastered”, such is the explanation given by the band on their MySpace blog. It seems futile to discuss it again separately, whereas merely some kind of comparison is used in order to present the new art in the light of the earlier one.

A comparison of the track lengths is rather futile as the actual differences are minuscule. It is not worth to bother about some seconds more or less. This seems to indicate that the band merely did some polishing on the surface and did not dare to dig deep into their art, with the intention of adding some additional elements into the song-writing. In order to get a better impression of the 'evolution' of the tracks the best advice seems to be a spin of both versions of each composition. Everything reveals itself at the very beginning. 'The Eye' has a better sound, the drums have been put into their place and the general balancing appears in such a level as to make the music quite listenable.

Diablery play some kind of modern black metal with a good amount of synths and ambient parts. The melodies are nice and well crafted, the concept is rather straightforward and offers not much of a surprise. Good for a spin now and then. Yes, this one is better.

The Frost – ...Of the Forest Unknown (2010)

(Croatia; Black Metal)

7 Tracks (Tape – War Productions) -_- - (~37:45)

<http://www.myspace.com/thefrosthord>, <http://www.war-productions.org/>

It is the debut ... it is finally there and it is too bad that it sucks.

Point1: Do not open the release with a solo unless it is good and you know what you are doing.

In case someone buys this album, then follow my advice and ignore the first track, because it is a pointless and boring and pointless solo that you might actually fall asleep to while listening to it. The irony would be the title of it:: Violent Ritual (!). Hilarious. Nothing ... absolutely nothing is violent or aggressive, or whatever term you might want to use, about it. Just some pointless drum wanking, which is not even good. Aeternus did it much better on their “...and So the Night Became” album, but the Croatian band is a good deal away from what the Norwegians had crafted once.

Point 2: Just because loads of bands use distorted vocals, does not mean you should, too.

Yes, I have to admit it, I overlooked – or ignored? – this aspect had in terms of the 'Everlasting Damnation' release, because on this output it worked as a nice counterpoint to the ice-cold sound of the guitars. With music that gave – and still gives – the impression of heaving been recorded live and without much of a polishing, the distortion added a nice touch to it all. Yet with the advent of the new tape and with a new kind of recording/setting this kind of manipulation becomes some kind of nuisance, is perceived as artificial and unnecessary. Furthermore, as the vocals tend to vanish or appear in a muffled kind of way, opens the question on the reasons or the intentions for using them. The tape has never had a chance to wear down considerably – it is a new one and right from the label –, the 'flaw' seem to part of the general concept then.

Point 3: Experimenting on the debut is a bad idea.

Or, experimenting might be a misleading term to those unfamiliar with the music that is explored by the Croatian band. Instead of following the path they had started to walk on with 'Everlasting Damnation', they returned, and for no apparent reason that is, because this release had been quite well done indeed, to some bland standardized kind of black metal. A kind that is played on such scale that it is a waste of time and energy to discuss it on any meaningful level. Linear and predictable are two terms that come to the mind instantly.

Point 4: Balancing, balancing, balancing ...

The second point shed light on one aspect already: the whole thing does not seem to have been thought through until the end. At times, the drums (snare) are a bit too loud, the guitars a bit too distant and the bass guitar does also seem to uncertain about the place in the concept. Rawness plays an essential role in the performance of 'The Frost' on this recording, but it gives the impression of having been added artificially and not coming naturally. A more in transparency and power would have had a positive effect on the music.

Point 5: If you have a bad intro, then have at least a good outro.

Does the Croatian band have such a thing? Exactly, they do not ...this guitar thing is as pointless and unnecessary as the drum solo. The listener is disturbed by the intro and bewildered at the outro.

There are seven tracks on this album and two of them are rather pointless, which leaves you with only five and this is not much for a debut release; roughly thirty minutes. Again the main title presents some important clues: the band had wandered into an unknown realm and failed at making use of what elements they had at their disposal. It is only natural to see them stuck somehow and present the art in such a way that is likely to create confusion. When it comes to describe the performance on this release in a nutshell then one word intrudes itself: pathetic. It is a step back from their 'Everlasting Damnation' one towards a level that might appeal to those who have a fancy for poorly produced and predictable underground black metal. Quite a leap in the wrong direction ... at least.

Note:

Comes as a professionally printed tap in an edition of 300 copies.

Immolith – Storm Dragon (2012-02)

(USA; Black Metal)

8 Tracks (CD – Metalhit) - _ _ - (37:50)

<http://www.metalhit.com/>, <http://www.immolith.net/>

2012 marks an important year for the American band 'Immolith', because in February their debut album finally hits the shelves. Around three years have passed since their first two outputs – 'Sojourn / Ghost Tower' & 'Hymns to the Countess' – and those who are familiar with these might be surprised by the direction the band has been taken since. Old-school black metal had been the concept on their early outputs, while their latest one has stepped away from this approach in some respect. Is it a change to the better?

The first and most obvious impression has to do with the sound and following this the general performance of the band. It is somewhat interesting to experience the change in style. On the early outputs the music had been calmer, was less intensive and aggressive. Interestingly, and this is quite daring indeed, 'Immolith' actually added parts of their tracks to the debut; whereby the listener is able to experience at least some of the older concept ... in a new improved sound that is. Nevertheless, those pieces mark a kind of disturbance, or maybe someone familiar with these will pay more attention towards them; both may be equally possible.



There is something of early 'Dark Funeral' and 'Bathory' in the music or in the way it comes along. Ferocity and a clear focus on fast paced sections, along with a distinct kind of minimalism, which is disturbed by solo elements now and then. It seems to fit the approach of the band better, because the somehow atmosphere on the early days had always this touch of artificiality; doing something in order to appeal to a certain obscure codex or norm. 'Storm Dragon' has more of a flow and consistency, even though the general approach is rather limited. Yes, limited. 'Immolith' do not offer something that has not been done before to some degree. Be it the tempo, the arrangements and the general flow, then one has to point to a considerable amount of releases that exist already. Nevertheless, the actual result is quite listenable, even though it might wear off way too soon.

It would have been nice for the band venture a bit more in the direction of 'Sacramentum' by adding more complexity and variation in the motives to their music. Currently everything drags a little bit on and comes up with too few surprising elements. What makes the listening experience a bit annoying is the reverb in the vocals. Is it really necessary to add such to the voice? Curiously, on an earlier recording this aspect had a negative impact as well. The "Sojourn / Ghost Tower" release had some strange oscillation (!) of the vocals from one speaker to the other. It seems these Americans still have to find a way on how to properly deal with this issue.

It had been a safe approach this kind and type of release. Nothing too daring, nothing too outré and nothing that would be perceived as being adventurous. Music from and for the underground it seems.

Note:

Released as a digipack.

Generation Welfare – Instrumentals for The Mental

(USA; Sludge, Thrash, Doom Metal, Instrumental)

7 Tracks (– Major Destroyer Records) -_-_- (18:23)

<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/generationwelfare>, <http://www.majordestroyer.com/>

The title seems to be missing something, at least this is the impression of the reviewer. Somehow it would be nice to see the aspect of the 'mental' specified in at least some detail, but as the spelling does appear in this way on several pages on the Internet, it seems that it had been intended in such way.

Once all the confusion has been set aside, the music is actually easy to deal with. 'Instrumentals' should be taken literally and the reference to the American band 'Billy Crystal Meth' should be emphasized. Why? Well, the similarities are simply striking: there are the nice but strange samples, there is the general absence of vocals and once their releases are compared, one has to acknowledge that the music follows a somewhat strikingly similar pattern. Doom, thrash and sludge can be found throughout the tracks in certain limits and degree. Regular readers of this magazine might remember the band 'Hands I Annul Yours' from the same label and it seems like to be some kind of speciality of it. Well, as the music is crafted in such a way as to make the performance quite listenable and as the samples help to create some kind of amusing counterpoint, Generation Welfare's release is recommended to those who have fancy for music that is heavy like warship at one moment and swift as a ride on a motorbike at the other. Good to listen to if you have a fascination for this type of music.

Dysphoric – Intens Melankoli (2011)

(Denmark; Black Metal, Depressive, Doom/Death Metal)

8 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_-_- (41:38)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dysphoric/190729574318437>, <http://dysphoric.bandcamp.com/>

Even today it is difficult. Even today it is quite a challenge to keep track of the evolution of a band; especially as I refuse to use Facebook. For some reason that I cannot fathom bands avoid a simple thing as a newsletter. Such is still better than relying on pointless garbage thrown on a web portal like it happens to be the case in Fecesbook and Shitter. Diaspora, sadly, is a similar garbage dump but on a smaller level.

Anyway, Dysphoric have released their debut towards the end of last year, but not all music on it would actually be new. The first three tracks have appeared on the Mørke demo before, which had been their second one, even though it had been released first; see the interview in the magazine No. 11 for some explanation on the matter. Aside from this, the compositions appear in a revamped kind of way and were granted more power compared to the early versions. Nevertheless, the band has broadened their spectrum since, and even though the music has remained rather dark, the track 'Allusion' comes with some surprising references to the death doom scene; a strange but also interesting contrast in terms of the heaviness to the the general concept of the band. Yes, as depressive black metal dominates the music of the Danish, it feels considerably 'light-hearted' compared with the aforementioned composition.

This impression is fostered through the general calmness of a good amount of the tracks, which can hardly be described as heavy at times; 'Happy Portrait', 'Happy Portrait III', 'In Infinite'. These are rather in a dark rock fashion or have metal elements, but on a rather slow scale. Aspects like dark ambient play a larger role in this respect and create a contrast to the 'general' style of Dysphoric. Other compositions have dense layers of guitars, whose play show a considerable amount of tremolo picking, not to mention a rather limited approach in the complexity; quick shifts in the tempo or the like are not to be discovered. The basic formula of the depressive black metal genre is applied here to some extent, with some additional venturing into the broader sphere of the main genre. How everything turns out is not such a bad thing after all, because the performance is actually quite listenable. What tends to disturb this experience somehow has to do with the vocals or rather their share in the overall concept. Again, and Dysphoric is no exception here, their parts tend to be overrepresented in the music, which diverts from the atmosphere and the melodies. It is somewhat pointless to be bombarded with lyrics from the beginning towards the end, especially as there is no counterpoint in sight that would support the instruments in a meaningful way. With a song-writing, whose focus would have balanced these two contrasting sides in a better way, the music might have gained in atmosphere and contrast. Currently the reliance on the vocal part with the instruments reduced to a support character, leaves the listener at a point in which this person might long for more.

Nevertheless, it is a curious release with a surprisingly large amount of contrast and facets. On the one hand there are tracks, which can hardly be described as metal, while others find themselves in a different spectrum. The melodies evolve nicely, the drum-computer is not overtly disturbing, also the atmosphere is haunting and once someone looks beyond the large amount of vocals – or does not pay that much attention towards them – then this release can be enjoyed to some extent. References are a bit tricky here, because the band offers doom/death, depressive black metal and dark ambient/black metal. See the notes below ... grab it and give it a try. You might find something interesting.



Note:

The album is available for free from their bandcamp site. A physical release is not available at the moment.

Obscurys

(Germany; Death Metal, Grindcore, Black Metal)

<http://www.myspace.com/obscurys>

I think I bought their debut demo at e-bay at some point in the past, but I am not entirely too sure about it. Somehow it came into my possession and had been reviewed for the Circle of

Destruction magazine – it also appears on the Metal Archives with a score. Since then two additional releases have seen the light, which were kindly provided by the band for the purpose of a more comprehensive feedback on their art.

Diary of my Untold Apocalypse (2010)

10 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) -_-_- (51:53)

It is an ambitious release. Ambitious on several levels. Ten tracks, an average length of over five minutes and compositions that break the barrier of seven minutes twice are not something a lot of bands would dare to present on their second demo. Yet the Germans behind Obscurys thought this might be the right way and deliver ... deliver on a large scale.

Three genre descriptors are listed above and these appear on various degrees throughout the release. In terms of the vocals the emphasis is rather in style of a death metal or grindcore band, as screams play a minor role and growls dominate the arena. A bit more varied is the approach in terms of the actual song-writing, but the emphasis lies on the death metal part, while the black metal is only allowed to shine through now and then.

Fast and aggressive versus slow and dark, this might sum up some basic impressions of this release. While the first tracks have a rather slow pace, the more the album progresses the more the tempo tends to see an increase at times. Due to the use of a drum-computer, the patterns in the rhythms are somewhat predictable and 'steady'. This would also be true of the way vocals and instruments play their game out. There is hardly – never would be an exaggeration – a coalescence between these two facets, in the sense that they support each other. How to understand this? Well, when the voice is there, the volume tends to drop a bit and also the dynamics take a dive down. Once this passage is over, the fury of the music is unleashed again and everything progresses back into some aggressive realms. It is strange to hear this ... it is especially strange because it tends to appear again and again.

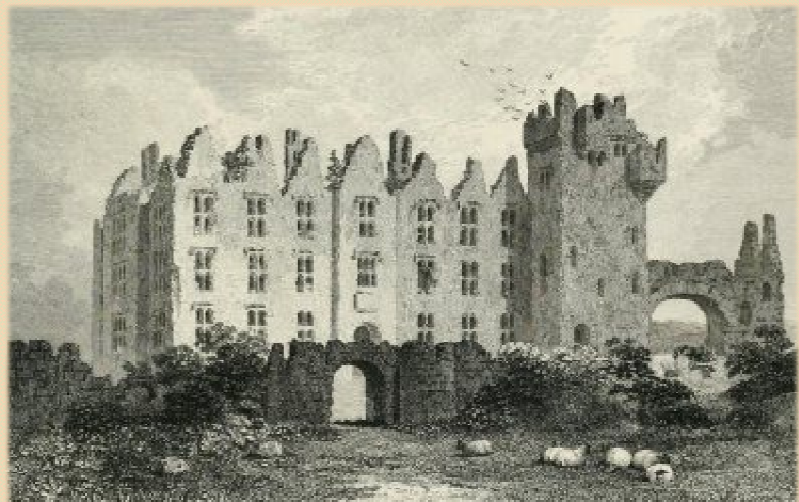
When it comes to the song-writing, then the general concept seems to be rather linear with not too much emphasis put in repeating certain segments. Well, at least not in such a way as to make them unbearable. The music has a old-school feeling, which is aided by the overall absence of a modern balanced sound. Instruments tend to feel distant at times, a bit hollow and without much of power. When it comes to pointing towards other bands as references, then some difficulties begin. Maybe a watered down version of 'Illdisposed', add a bit of Hypocrisy and the German Belmez – atmosphere – and some direction is provided. Hints on aggressive black metal have also be mentioned and also the a punkish touch now and then should not be neglected; these add a nice twist to the compositions. 'Diary of my Untold Apocalypse' is heavy but only in certain limits. The production and a limitation in the complexity ruin it a bit. More solos would have been nice as well; Pest Swarm. A bit out of the ordinary routine would be the track 'Dungeon of a Cyanide Blooded Soul', whose occasional keyboard layers add a nice charming touch and wake memories on the early days of the 90s Norwegian black metal scene.

The second demo is anything but easy stuff. It takes time to digest this release and even though some nice ideas appear throughout various tracks on this recording, the aspect that it is just a demonstration cannot be shaken off. In case someone wants to give music a try that in concept falls a bit out of the ordinary routine, then this piece of art might quench the thirst.

Seelenfrost (2012)

6 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) -_-_
(17:41)

Operation failed, patient dead? A short comparison with the 2010 release – Diary of my Untold Apocalypse – reveals that the band seems to have shifted their concept a bit. Longer tracks are no more, the average has dropped significantly and also the total number of compositions per release has seen a decrease. What about the basic concept then? Has it remains the same? Nope.



Seelenfrost is a tiring release. Average death/black metal, muffled vocals, flaws in the balancing and also the production could have been better. Obscurys offers music that has been stripped down of a considerable elements used on the previous recording, with the obvious result that the level of performance has become absolutely average. No more solos, drum-computer bombardment, predictable song-writing ... nothing that cannot be found on countless releases throughout the underground these days.

This latest instalment is conservative and this might be the reason why it is such a surprise. While 'Diary of my Untold Apocalypse' had rather been bloated and left the listener without a clear direction, this latest output bewilders due to the scarcity with which it offers something worth remembering. Would the flaw be limited to the errors in the production, then you might be able to look over these, but the problem cuts deeper. No more solos, no keyboard parts, no surprising elements ... blandness as far as the eyes can see. A leap in the wrong direction... at least.

Note:

50 copies; hand-numbered, CDr.

To sum it all up:

The band does not seem to be entirely sure about where they want to go with their music and even how this has actually to sound. It is somewhat interesting to notice the gap between the latest two demos and how much they differ from each other. In some respect it would be fair to state that these could have been done by two different bands.

Analgesia – Beyond Illusion (2011)

(Morocco; Gothic Metal/Rock)

9 Tracks (CD? – Self-released) - _ _ - (35:15)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Analgesia/128042967822>, <http://www.analgesia.110mb.com/Index.Official.htm>

So there we are ... 'beyond illusion'. The mystical imagery has been shattered, through which the gist of the matter lies exposed for us to watch, examine and analyse. Have we really reached this state or do new types of thinking have merely replaced them, whose sweet odour diverts our attention from the important aspects of life again. The 'necessary illusions' that play such a vital role in modern politics and the realm of today's mass media. No, the band does hardly touch this topic ... sorry.

It may be necessary to shed some light on the general approach by the band and how they present their art. Even though some kind of genre descriptor had been used above, these fail short in giving insights in their performance. There are Viking elements – I am not kidding –, Ayreon references, Nightwish of course, pop/rock/ballad elements and this list should make clear that Analgesia is rather a potpourri of contrasting sounds and atmospheres. Compared with established bands from the west one could bring up the argument that the performance consists of some random elements, as a red line or a general idea seems to be absent.

Well, as the basic elements have been discussed above, it should further be noted that the release seems to have been cut into two halves; 1-5 and 6-9 respectively. Why is this so? 'Clock of all Time' is an instrumental reprise of the motive from the opener and a gap in terms of the topics this band explores. In the first segments topics regarding the current stirs/uprisings in the Maghreb are brought up in various ways, while the second has a larger emphasis on relationships and love. There is no real revolutionary spirit in the lyrics, but some passages can be read in multiple ways and leave some room for speculation. It is expressed in a roundabout way and not openly; something that is all to natural, due to the political situation in Morocco.

This all is present in a way that comes rather pompous across at times, with a lot of layers, choir parts, Viking chants and all this stuff bands like Nightwish have become famous for. A contrast to this powerful approach would be the ballad or ballad-like parts, whose elements have been stripped down to basic elements: guitar and violin. Cheerful as well as melancholic elements appear on this release side by side. The former tends to dominate the latter and when it comes to the metal aspect of it all, the performance seems to emphasize something that has less teeth than one might expect.

Analgesia have crafted a piece of art that can be enjoyed, even it is messy in the overall way it had been conceived. Some nice elements tend to shine through now and then, while the melodies are generally quite listenable. When it comes to novelty, then this band has hardly invented the genre anew. In case someone is familiar with a variety of bands from a variety of genres, then this person will notice a considerable amount of references. As long as these are present in such a manner as to give a convincing impression this is not something that should be criticized, but the Moroccan band fails in this respect. There is simply too much to and fro, a general lack of consistency and flow. It is rather a compilation of ideas and in case someone wants to get a glimpse of how music is being crafted in the Maghreb, then this band might be a starting point.

Strange poetry section

Rosie Thomas – Where Was I (2012)

(USA; Folk, Pop)

<http://rosiethomas.bandcamp.com/track/where-was-i>, <http://www.undertowstore.com/artist/ROSIE-THOMAS>

Warning ... warning ...
it's alarming
sets the pace but breaks the face

Sweet the tunes, though sad the notes
Clotho's spindle's yarn here roves
No longer weaves life's complex quilt
But plunges man in deaf'ning guilt.

This 'ncertainty in evr'ones life's
how messiness and sadness rife
Impossible to shake it (all) off
Blinding like a sacred cloth.

A predicament all too apparent
Racing in 'n atomizing current
And a chasm that cannot crossed
And energy that is therefore lost

Oh!, how we have to pity ourselves,
everything that lives and dwells
Sicilian in the heart at best
Not filling the Irish in our chest

Yet a word that has not been burned
A life that has never been churned
Like a page that has never been turned
Is (as) hollow as a soul tha' is furled

And in the end it is simply all the same
no one and all have to carry the blame

A final sigh ...
Where was I?
Ah yes,
Goodbye.

Nina Grollmann

(USA; Folk, Experimental)

<http://ninagrollman.bandcamp.com/>

What a weirdo
What do we-ir-do?
Is she here? No!
Soon to hear, tho'.

Witch' red hair, her
A grudge to bear
Sounds oh so dear
Noise not to fear.

Hard to compare
But do you care?
Enter her lair
Suck the odd air

Be a weirdo?
Imperative,
like in Kant?
Well, At least you do not get strand'

Harry Bertoia USA (1915-1978)
Echoes Of Other Times [Sonambient 1023]
http://www.ubu.com/sound/bertoia_1023.html

What is time?
Where is time?
Can you feel time?
Can you see time?
Can you taste time?
Why is there time?
Would we be able to live without time?

Can there be two times at one time?
Can we then jump from one time to another time?
Can we delete time?

Is time static?
Has time always been static?
Will time be static at some point?

I would like to ignore time!

No offence, time, but I hate you.

You will run out of it towards the end
You can never have enough of it
You cannot collect it
You cannot rewind it
You cannot look beyond it
You run away from the past, only to be absorbed in it.

Time offers no absolution, only oblivion
Time is not life but death, because the short moment in which everything exists shrinks in comparison with the rest
Time is only money as long as such a thing as money exists.
Time is the nurse and breeder of all good; Shakespeare did apparently not know about nuclear accidents back then.
Time is generally the best medicine; as long as you do not have Alzheimer's or cancer.
Time was made for slaves... or to enslave.
The happier the time, the quicker it passes; why do I feel so miserable after a dreamless night, then?

Ever eating, never cloying,
All-devouring, all-destroying,
Never finding full repast,
Till I eat the world at last.

And

Let us therefore raise a flask
Cheers!

(With inspirations from Wikiquote)
<https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Time>

Recommendations and random strange stuff

Baishui – 花拾叁樓主人 / Host of a Building Named Flower Terrace Temple

<http://baishui.bandcamp.com/album/host-of-a-building-named-flower-terrace-temple>

As the name/ title suggests, this release is from China. Some experimental folk music can be found on this album. Traditional elements appear as well, but they are approached from a broader perspective.

Truco Espárrago

<http://trucoesparrago.blogspot.com/>

A label with some strange but interesting music. There had been some negotiations regarding reviews, but I felt more comfortable with buying the stuff than getting them for free. Noise is always a bit tricky in terms of writing on it.

Chips and Beer Magazine #2 is out

<http://chipsandbeer.net/>

Some really good professional stuff ... extensive interviews and shit. 30 pages coverage of King Diamond.

As Loud as Possible #2 will be out ... soon.

<http://www.asloudaspossible.org/>

The first edition had been anything but excellent. A must read for everyone interested in the noise scene. The next edition should be out soon. A definite release date is not available while writing these lines, but everything point to it being available in the near future.

Shaytan Productions

<http://www.shaytanproductions.com/>

A label with a certain focus on Middle Eastern metal. They will also release the forthcoming output from the Saudi-Arabian black metal band Al-Namrood.

Astrum

<http://www.reverbnation.com/themightyastrum>

The band has been covered by me quite extensively and some interesting changes have been taken place. A female vocalist has joined their ranks and it may be interesting to hear how this will play out on their next release – later this year. Check the link above for some fresh live videos.

Ater

<https://www.facebook.com/aterblackmetal>

They have a new release forthcoming (late February) and its title is 'De Aeterna Tragoedia'. It is an EP of 4 tracks (intro + 3 songs and a playing time of 20 minutes). An interview with them can be found in the 14th edition.

Death to Music Production

<http://www.deathtomusic.com/>

They have some new releases available for free download.

Captain 3 Leg

<http://captainthreeleg.bandcamp.com/>

It is a bit hard to nail the band to a specific style, therefore everyone might find something listenable amongst their albums; no, there is no black metal here ... sorry.

Last but not least:

The Humans are dead (extended version)

<http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/589914>

It is a take on a track by 'Flight of The Conchords'. Check it out for some 'binary solo' ... simply amazing.

O yellow sweater

<http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/589264>

Gorillaz have been the inspiration for this flash animation ...

Sources for the pictures:

<http://www.archive.org/details/sportsofworldwit00afla>
<http://www.archive.org/details/caricaturewithum01newy>
<http://www.archive.org/details/confessionofchil01demu>
<http://www.archive.org/details/georgejpinwellhi00will>
<http://www.archive.org/details/irelandillustrat00wrig>
<http://www.archive.org/details/ladyofcamillias06duma>
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<http://www.archive.org/details/monsieurdecamors06feui>
<http://www.archive.org/details/nouvelles02demu>
<http://www.archive.org/details/oilswatercolorsp00whis>
<http://www.archive.org/details/opicturesquebeaut00alle>
<http://www.archive.org/details/raphael04dela>
<http://www.archive.org/details/rhineitalygreece00wrig>

Outlook

More of the same I would say ...

Interviews, reviews, poetry ... a bit of everything.

